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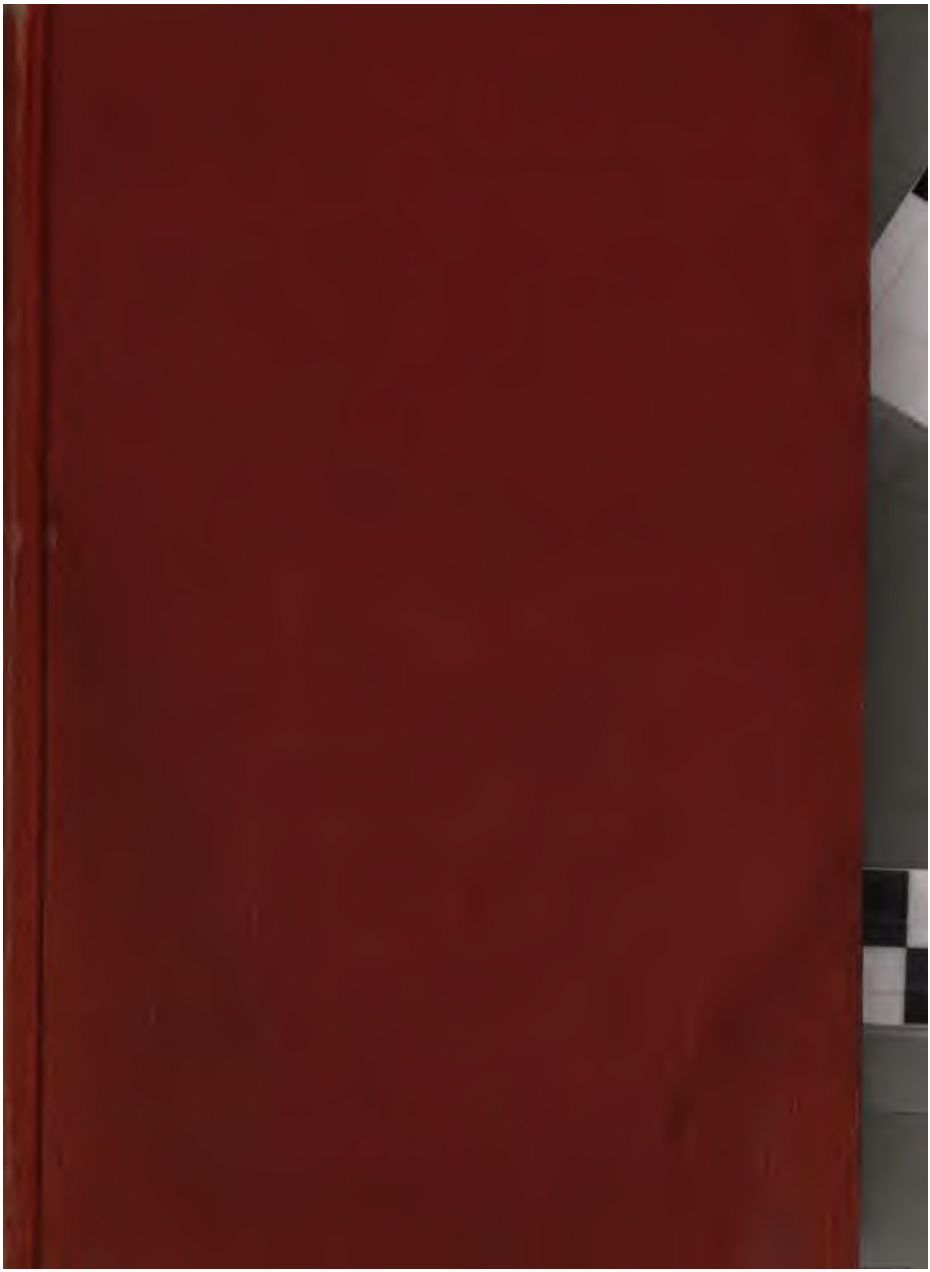

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LITTLE BUTTERCUP.

For I am called Little Buttercup, — dear Little Buttercup,
Though I never could tell why;
But still I'm called Buttercup, — poor Little Buttercup,
Sweet Little Buttercup I!

CAPTAIN CORCORAN.

Fair moon, to thee I sing
Bright regent of the heavens;
Say, why is every thing
Either at sixes or at sevens?

BILL BOBSTAY, THE BOS'N.

He is an Englishman!
For he himself has sa
And it's greatly to h
That he is an English

DICK DEADEYE.

"I'm ugly too, aint I?"

SIR JOSEPH PORTER, K.C.B.

I am the monarch of the Sea,
The ruler of the Queen's Navee,—
When at anchor here I ride,
My bosom swells with pride,
And I snap my fingers at a foeman's taunts.

COUSIN HEBE.

And so do his sisters, and his cousins and his aun
His sisters and his cousins!
Whom he reckons by the dozens,
And his aunts!

RALPH *RACKSTRAW.*

"I am the lowliest tar
That sails the water,
And you, proud maiden, are
My captain's daughter"

JOSEPHINE.

"Refrain, audacious tar,
Your suit from pressing,
Remember what you are
And whom addressing.

AUNT JO'S SCRAP-BAG.

JIMMY'S CRUISE IN THE PINAFORE,
ETC.

BY LOUISA M. ALCOTT,

AUTHOR OF "LITTLE WOMEN," "AN OLD-FASHIONED GIRL," "LITTLE MEN," "HOSPITAL SKETCHES."

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CONTENTS.

I. JIMMY'S CRUISE IN THE PINAFORE . . . 5
II. TWO LITTLE TRAVELLERS 27
III. A JOLLY FOURTH 38
IV. SEVEN BLACK CATS 52
V. ROSA'S TALE 67
VI. LUNCH 89
VII. A BRIGHT IDEA 105
VIII. HOW THEY CAMPED OUT 119
IX. MY LITTLE SCHOOL-GIRL 141
X. WHAT A SHOVEL DID 154
XI. CLAMS 168
XII. KITTY'S CATTLE SHOW 182
XIII. WHAT BECOMES OF THE PINS 189

TOM TUCKER, MIDSHIPMITE.

AUNT JO'S SCRAP-BAG.

I.

JIMMY'S CRUISE IN THE PINAFORE.

HOW HE SHIPPED.

A BOY sat on a door-step in a despondent attitude, with his eyes fixed on a pair of very shabby shoes, and his elbows resting on his knees, as if to hide the big patches there. But it was not the fact that his toes were nearly out and his clothes dilapidated which brought the wrinkles to his forehead and the tears to his eyes, for he was used to that state of things, and bore it without complaint. The prospect was a dull one for a lively lad full of the spring longings which sunny April weather always brings. But it was not the narrow back-street where noisy children played and two or three dusty trees tried to bud without sunshine, that made him look so dismal. Nor was it the

knowledge that a pile of vests was nearly ready for him to trudge away with before he could really rest after doing many errands to save mother's weary feet.

No, it was a burden that lay very heavily on his heart, and made it impossible to even whistle as he waited. Above the sounds that filled the street he heard a patient moan from the room within; and no matter what object his eyes rested on, he saw with sorrowful distinctness a small white face turned wistfully toward the window, as if weary of the pillow where it had laid so long.

Merry little Kitty, who used to sing and dance from morning till night, was now so feeble and wasted that he could carry her about like a baby. All day she lay moaning softly, and her one comfort was when "brother" could come and sing to her. That night he could not sing; his heart was so full, because the doctor had said that the poor child must have country air as soon as possible, else she never would recover from the fever which left her such a sad little ghost of her former self. But, alas, there was no money for the trip, and

mother was sewing day and night to earn enough for a week at least of blessed country air and quiet. Jimmy did his best to help, but could find very little to do, and the pennies came in so slowly he was almost in despair.

There was no father to lend a strong hand, and Mrs. Nelson was one of the "silent poor," who cannot ask for charity, no matter how much they may need it. The twelve-year-old boy considered himself the man of the family, and manfully carried as many burdens as his young shoulders would bear; but this was a very heavy one, so it is no wonder that he looked sober. Holding his curly head in his hands, as if to keep it from flying asunder with the various plans working inside, he sat staring at the dusty bricks in a desperate frame of mind.

Warm days were coming, and every hour was precious, for poor Kitty pined in the close room, and all he could do was to bring her dandelions and bits of green grass from the Common when she begged to go in the fields and pick "pretties" for herself. He loved the little sister dearly, and,

as he remembered her longing, his eyes filled, and he doubled up both fists with an air of determination, muttering to himself, —

"She *shall* go! I don't see any other way, and I'll do it!"

The plan which had been uppermost lately was this. His father had been a sailor, and Jimmy proposed to run away to sea as cabin boy. His wages were to be paid before he went, so mother and Kitty could be in the country while he was gone, and in a few months he would come sailing gayly home to find the child her rosy self again. A very boyish and impossible plan, but he meant it, and was in just the mood to carry it out, — for every other attempt to make money had failed.

"I'll do it as sure as my name is Jim Nelson I'll take a look at the ships this very night, and go in the first one that will have me," he said, with a resolute nod of the head, though his heart sank within him at the thought. "I wonder which kind of captains pay boys best? I guess I'll try a steamer; they make short trips. I heard the cannon to-day, so one is in, and I'll try for a place before I go to bed."

Little did desperate Jimmy guess what ship he would really sail in, nor what a prosperous voyage he was about to make; for help was coming that very minute, as it generally does, sooner or later, to generous people who are very much in earnest.

First a shrill whistle was heard, at the sound of which he looked up quickly; then a rosy-faced girl of about his own age came skipping down the street, swinging her hat by one string; and, as Jimmy watched her approach, a smile began to soften the grim look he wore, for Willy Bryant was his best friend and neighbor, being full of courage, fun, and kindness. He nodded, and made room for her on the step, — the place she usually occupied at spare moments when they got lessons and recounted their scrapes to each other.

But to-night Willy seemed possessed of some unusually good piece of news which she chose to tell in her own lively fashion, for, instead of sitting down, she began to dance a sailor's hornpipe, singing gayly, "I 'm little Buttercup, sweet little Buttercup," till her breath gave out.

"What makes you so jolly, Will?" asked Jimmy

as she dropped down beside him and fanned herself with the ill-used hat.

"Such fun — you 'll never guess — just what we wanted — if your mother only will! You 'll dance, too, when you know," panted the girl, smiling like a substantial sort of fairy come to bring good luck.

"Fire away, then. It will have to be extra nice to set me off. I don't feel a bit like jigs now." answered Jimmy, as the gloom obscured his face again, like a cloud over the sun.

"You know 'Pinafore'?" began Willy and getting a quick nod for an answer, she poured forth the following tale with great rapidity: "Well, some folks are going to get it up with children to do it, and they want any boys and girls that can sing to go and be looked at to-morrow, and the good ones will be picked out, and dressed up, and taught how to act, and have the nicest time that ever was. Some of our girls are going, and so am I, and you sing and must come, too, and have some fun. Won't it be jolly?"

"I guess it would; but I can't. Mother needs me every minute out of school," began Jimmy, with a

shake of the head, having made up his mind some time ago that he must learn to do without fun.

"But we shall be paid for it," cried Will, clapping her hands with the double delight of telling the best part of her story, and seeing Jimmy's sober face clear suddenly as if the sun had burst forth with great brilliancy.

"Really? How much? Can I sing well enough?" and he clutched her arm excitedly, for this unexpected ray of hope dazzled him.

"Some of them will have ten dollars a week, and some more, — the real nice ones, like Lee, the singing boy, who is a wonder," answered Will, in the tone of one well informed on such points.

"Ten dollars!" gasped Jimmy, for the immensity of the sum took his breath away. "Could *I* get that? How long? Where do we go? Do they really want us fellows? Are you sure it's all true?"

"It was all in the paper, and Miss Pym, the teacher who boards at our house, told Ma about it. The folks advertised for school-children, sixty of 'em, and will really pay; and Ma said I could go

and try, and all the money I get I'm going to put in a bank and have for my own. Don't you believe me now?"

Miss Pym and the newspapers settled the matter in Jimmy's mind, and made him more anxious than before about the other point.

"Do you think *I* would have any chance?" he asked, still holding Will, who seemed inclined for another dance.

"I know you would. Don't you do splendidly at school? And didn't they want you for a choir boy, only your mother couldn't spare you?" answered Will, decidedly; for Jimmy did love music, and had a sweet little pipe of his own, as she well knew.

"Mother will have to spare me now, if they pay like that. I can work all day and do without sleep to earn money this way. Oh, Will, I'm so glad you came, for I was just ready to run away to sea. There didn't seem anything else to do," whispered Jimmy in a choky sort of tone, as hopes and fears struggled together in his boyish mind.

"Run as fast as you like, and I'll go too. We'll sail in the 'Pinafore,' and come home with our pockets full of money.

"'Sing, hey, the merry maiden and the tar!'"

burst out Will, who was so full of spirits she could not keep still another minute.

Jimmy joined in, and the fresh voices echoed through the street so pleasantly that Mrs. Peters stopped scolding her six squabbling children, while Kitty's moaning changed to a feeble little sound of satisfaction, for "brother's" lullabies were her chief comfort and delight.

"We shall lose school, you know, for we act in the afternoon, not the evening. I don't care; but you will, you like to study so well. Miss Pym didn't like it at first, but Ma said it would help the poor folks, and a little fun wouldn't hurt the children. I thought of you right away, and if you don't get as much money as I do, you shall have some of mine, so Kitty can go away soon."

Will's merry face grew very sweet and kind as she said that, and Jimmy was glad his mother called him just then, because he did not know how

to thank this friend in need. When he came out with the parcel of vests he looked like a different boy, for Mrs. Nelson had told him to go and find out all about it, and had seemed as much dazzled by the prospect as he did, sewing was such weary work.

Their interview with Miss Pym was a most encouraging one, and it was soon settled that Jimmy should go with Will to try for a place on the morrow.

"And I'll get it, too!" he said to himself, as he kissed Kitty's thin cheek, full of the sweet hope that he might be the means of bringing back life and color to the little face he loved so well.

He was so excited he could not sleep, and beguiled the long hours by humming under his breath all the airs he knew belonging to the already popular opera. Next morning he flew about his work as if for a wager, and when Will came for him there was not a happier heart in all the city than the hopeful one that thumped under Jimmy's threadbare best jacket.

Such a crowd of girls and boys as they found at

the hall where they were told to apply for inspection; such a chirping and piping went on there, it sounded like a big cage full of larks and linnets; and by and by, when the trial was over, such a smiling troop of children as was left to be drilled by the energetic gentlemen who had the matter in hand. Among this happy band stood our Jimmy, chosen for his good voice, and Will, because of her bright face and lively, self-possessed manners. They could hardly wait to be dismissed, and it was a race home to see who should be first to tell the good news. Jimmy tried to be quiet on Kitty's account, but failed entirely; and it was a pleasant sight to see the boy run into his mother's arms, crying joyfully,—

"I'm in! I'm in! Ten dollars a week! Hurrah!"

"I can hardly believe it!" And weary Mrs Nelson dropped her needle to indulge in a few moments of delightful repose.

"If it goes well they may want us for a month or six weeks," the man said. "Just think, maybe I'll get fifty or sixty dollars! and Baby will get well

right off," cried Jimmy, in an arithmetical sort of rapture, as he leaned above Kitty, who tried to clap her little hands without quite knowing what the joy was all about.

HOW HE SAILED.

After that day Jimmy led a very happy life, for he loved music and enjoyed the daily drill with his mates, though it was long before he saw the inside of the theatre. Will knew a good deal about it, for an actor's family had boarded with her mother, and the little girl had been behind the scenes. But to Jimmy, who had only seen one fairy play, all was very strange when at last he went upon the stage; for the glittering world he expected was gone, and all was dusty, dark, and queer, with trap-doors underfoot, machinery overhead, and a wilderness of scenery jumbled together in the drollest way. He was all eyes and ears, and enjoyed himself immensely as he came and went, sung and acted, with the troop of lads who made up the sailor chorus. It was a real ship to him, in spite of painted cannon, shaky masts, and cabin doors that led nowhere. He

longed to run up the rigging; but as that was forbidden, for fear of danger, he contented himself by obeying orders with nautical obedience, singing with all his might, and taking great satisfaction in his blue suit with the magical letters "H. M. S. Pinafore" round his cap.

Day by day all grew more and more interesting. His mother was never tired of hearing his adventures, he sung Kitty to sleep with the new songs, and the neighbors took such a friendly interest in his success that they called him Lord Nelson, and predicted that he would be as famous as his great namesake.

When the grand day came at last, and the crew of jolly young tars stood ready to burst forth with the opening chorus,

> "We sail the ocean blue,
> Our saucy ship 's a beauty,
> We 're gallant men and true,
> And bound to do our duty!"

Jimmy hardly knew whether he stood on his head or his heels at first, for, in spite of many rehearsals, everything seemed changed. Instead of daylight

gas shone everywhere, the empty seats were full, the orchestra playing splendidly, and when the curtain rose, a sea of friendly faces welcomed them, and the pleasant sound of applause made the hearts under the blue jackets dance gayly.

How those boys did sing! how their eyes shone, and their feet kept time to the familiar strains! with what a relish they hitched up their trousers and lurched about, or saluted and cheered as the play demanded. With what interest they watched the microscopic midshipmite, listened to Rafe as his sweet voice melodiously told the story of his hapless love, and smiled on pretty Josephine, who was a regular bluebird without the scream.

"Ain't this fun?" whispered Jimmy's next neighbor, taking advantage of a general burst of laughter, as the inimitable little bumboat woman advertised her wares with captivating drollery.

"Right down jolly!" answered Jimmy, feeling that a series of somersaults across the stage would be an immense relief to the pent-up emotions of his boyish soul. For under all the natural excitement of the hour deep down lay the sweet certainty

that he was earning health for Kitty, and it made his heart sing for joy more blithely than any jovial chorus to which he lent his happy voice.

But his bliss was not complete till the stately Sir Joseph, K. C. B., had come aboard, followed by "his sisters and his cousins and his aunts;" for among that flock of devoted relatives in white muslin and gay ribbons was Will. Standing in the front row, her bright face was good to see, for her black eyes sparkled, every hair on her head curled its best, her cherry bows streamed in the breeze, and her feet pranced irresistibly at the lively parts of the music. She longed to dance the hornpipe which the little Quaker aunt did so capitally, but, being denied that honor, distinguished herself by the comic vigor with which she "polished up the handle of the big front door," and did the other "business" recorded by the gallant "ruler of the Queen's Navee."

She and Jimmy nodded to each other behind the Admiral's august back, and while Captain Corcoran was singing to the moon, and Buttercup suffering the pangs of "Wemorse," the young

people had a gay time behind the scenes. Jimmy and Will sat upon a green baize bank to compare notes, while the relatives flew about like butterflies, and the sailors talked base-ball, jack-knives, and other congenial topics, when not envying Sir Joseph his cocked hat, and the Captain his epaulettes.

It was a very successful launch, and the merry little crew set sail with a fair wind and every prospect of a prosperous voyage. When the first performance was over, our two children left their fine feathers behind them, like Cinderella when the magic hour struck, and went gayly home, feeling much elated, for they knew they should go back to fresh triumphs, and were earning money by their voices like Jenny Lind and Mario. How they pitied other boys and girls who could not go in at that mysterious little door; how important they felt as parts of the spectacle about which every one was talking, and what millionnaires they considered themselves as they discussed their earnings and planned what to do with the prospective fortunes.

That was the beginning of many busy, happy weeks for both the children, — weeks which they long remembered with great pleasure, as did older and wiser people; for that merry, innocent little opera proved that theatres can be made the scenes of harmless amusement, and opened to a certain class of young people a new and profitable field for their talents. So popular did this small company become that the piece went on through the summer vacation, and was played in the morning as well as afternoon to satisfy the crowds who wished to see and hear it.

Never had the dear old Boston Museum, which so many of us have loved and haunted for years, seen such a pretty sight as one of those morning performances. It was the perfection of harmless merry-making, and the audience was as pleasant a spectacle as that upon the stage. Fathers and mothers stole an hour from their busy lives to come and be children with their children, irresistibly attracted and charmed by the innocent fun, the gay music that bewitched the ear one could hardly tell why, and the artless acting of those who are always

playing parts, whether the nursery or the theatre is their stage.

The windows stood open, and sunshine and fresh air came in to join the revel. Babies crowed and prattled, mammas chatted together, old people found they had not forgotten how to laugh, and boys and girls rejoiced over the discovery of a new delight for holidays. It was good to be there, and in spite of all the discussion in papers and parlors, no harm came to the young mariners, but much careful training of various sorts, and well-earned wages that went into pockets which sorely needed a silver lining.

HOW THE VOYAGE ENDED.

So the good ship "Pinafore" sailed and sailed for many prosperous weeks, and when at last she came into port and dropped anchor for the season she was received with a salute of general approbation for the successful engagement out of which she came with her flags flying and not one of her gallant crew killed or wounded. Well pleased with their share of the glory, officers and men went

ashore to spend their prize money with true sailor generosity, all eager to ship again for another cruise in the autumn.

But long before that time Able Seaman James Nelson had sent his family into the country, mother begging Will to take good care of her dear boy till he could join them, and Kitty throwing kisses as she smiled good-by, with cheeks already the rosier for the comforts "brother" had earned for her. Jimmy would not desert his ship while she floated, but managed to spend his Sundays out of town, often taking Will with him as first mate; and, thanks to her lively tongue, friends were soon made for the new-comers. Mrs. Nelson found plenty of sewing, Kitty grew strong and well in the fine air, and the farmer with whom they lived, seeing what a handy lad the boy was, offered him work and wages for the autumn, so all could be independent and together. With this comfortable prospect before him, Jimmy sang away like a contented blackbird, never tiring of his duty, for he was a general favorite, and Kitty literally strewed his way with flowers gathered by her own grateful little hands.

When the last day came, he was in such spirits that he was found doing double-shuffles in corners, hugging the midshipmite, who was a little girl of about Kitty's age, and treating his messmates to peanuts with a lavish hand. Will had her hornpipe, also, when the curtain was down, kissed every one of the other "sisters, cousins, and aunts," and joined lustily in the rousing farewell cheers given by the crew.

A few hours later, a cheerful-looking boy might have been seen trudging toward one of the railway-stations. A new hat, brave in blue streamers, was on his head; a red balloon struggled to escape from one hand; a shabby carpet-bag, stuffed full, was in the other; and a pair of shiny shoes creaked briskly, as if the feet inside were going on a very pleasant errand.

About this young traveller, who walked with a sailor-like roll and lurch, revolved a little girl chattering like a magpie, and occasionally breaking into song, as if she couldn't help it.

"Be sure you come next Saturday; it won't be half such fun if you don't go halves," said the boy,

beaming at her as he hauled down the impatient balloon, which seemed inclined to break from its moorings

"'Yes, I know
That is so!'"

hummed the girl with a skip to starboard, that she might bear a hand with the bag. "Keep some cherries for me, and don't forget to give Kit the doll I dressed for her."

"I shouldn't have been going myself if it hadn't been for you, Will. I never shall forget that," said Jimmy, whom intense satisfaction rendered rather more sedate than his friend.

"Running away to sea is great fun,

'With a tar that ploughs the water!'"

sung Will in spite of herself.

"'And a gallant captain's daughter,'"

echoed Jimmy, smiling across the carpet-bag. Then both joined in an irrepressible chorus of "Dash it Dash it!" as a big man nearly upset them and a dog barked madly at the balloon.

Being safely landed in the train, Jimmy hung

out of the window till the last minute, discussing his new prospects with Will, who stood on tiptoe outside, bubbling over with fun.

"I'll teach you to make butter and cheese, and you shall be my dairy-woman, for I mean to be a farmer," he said, just as the bell rang.

"All right, I'd like that ever so much." And then the irrepressible madcap burst out, to the great amusement of the passengers, —

"'For you might have been a Roosian,
A Frenchman, Turk or Proosian,
Or an Ital-i-an.'"

And Jimmy could not resist shouting back, as the train began to move, —

"'But in spite of all temptations
To belong to other nations,
I'm an Amer-i-can.'"

Then he subsided, to think over the happy holiday before him and the rich cargo of comfort, independence, and pleasure he had brought home from his successful cruise in the "Pinafore."

1927

II.

TWO LITTLE TRAVELLERS.

THE first of these true histories is about Annie Percival, — a very dear and lovely child, whose journey interested many other children, and is still remembered with gratitude by those whom she visited on a far-off island.

Annie was six when she sailed away to Fayal with her mother, grandmamma, and "little Aunt Ruth," as she called the young aunty who was still a schoolgirl. Very cunning was Annie's outfit, and her little trunk was a pretty as well as a curious sight, for everything was so small and complete it looked as if a doll was setting off for Europe. Such a wee dressing-case, with bits of combs and brushes for the curly head; such a cosey scarlet wrapper for the small woman to wear in her berth, with slippers to match when she trotted from state-room to state-room; such piles of tiny garments laid nicely in,

and the owner's initials on the outside of the trunk not to mention the key on a ribbon in her pocket, as grown up as you please.

I think the sight of that earnest, sunshiny face must have been very pleasant to all on board, no matter how seasick they might be, and the sound of the cheery little voice, as sweet as the chirp of a bird, especially when she sung the funny song about the "Owl and the pussy-cat in the pea-green boat," for she had charming ways, and was always making quaint, wise, or loving remarks.

Well, "they sailed and they sailed," and came at last to Fayal, where everything was so new and strange that Annie's big brown eyes could hardly spare time to sleep, so busy were they looking about. The donkeys amused her very much, so did the queer language and ways of the Portuguese people round her, especially the very droll names given to the hens of a young friend. The biddies seemed to speak the same dialect as at home, but evidently they understood Spanish also, and knew their own names, so it was fun to go and call Rio, Pico, Cappy, Clarissa, Whorfie, and poor Simonena, whose breast-

bone grew out so that she could not eat and had to be killed.

But the thing which made the deepest impression on Annie was a visit to a charity-school at the old convent of San Antonio. It was kept by some kind ladies, and twenty-five girls were taught and cared for in the big, bare place, that looked rather gloomy and forlorn to people from happy Boston, where charitable institutions are on a noble scale, as everybody knows.

Annie watched all that went on with intelligent interest, and when they were shown into the play room she was much amazed and afflicted to find that the children had nothing to play with but a heap of rags, out of which they made queer dolls, with ravelled twine for hair, faces rudely drawn on the cloth, and funny boots on the shapeless legs. No other toys appeared, but the girls sat on the floor of the great stone room, — for there was no furniture, — playing contentedly with their poor dolls, and smiling and nodding at "the little Americana," who gravely regarded this sad spectacle, wondering how they could get on without china and waxen babies,

tea-sets, and pretty chairs and tables to keep house with.

The girls thought that she envied them their dolls, and presently one came shyly up to offer two of their best, leaving the teacher to explain in English their wish to be polite to their distinguished guest. Like the little gentlewoman she was, Annie graciously accepted the ugly bits of rag with answering nods and smiles, and carried them away with her as carefully as if they were of great beauty and value.

But when she was at home she expressed much concern and distress at the destitute condition of the children. Nothing but rags to play with seemed a peculiarly touching state of poverty to her childish mind, and being a generous creature she yearned to give of her abundance to "all the poor orphans who didn't have any nice dollies." She had several pets of her own, but not enough to go round even if she sacrificed them, so kind grandmamma, who had been doing things of this sort all her life, relieved the child's perplexity by promising to send twenty-five fine dolls to Fayal as soon as the party

returned to Boston, where these necessaries of child life are cheap and plenty.

Thus comforted, Annie felt that she could enjoy her dear Horta and Chica Pico Faticra, particular darlings rechristened since her arrival. A bundle of gay bits of silk, cloth, and flannel, and a present of money for books, were sent out to the convent by the ladies. A treat of little cheeses for the girls to eat with their dry bread was added, much to Annie's satisfaction, and helped to keep alive her interest in the school of San Antonio.

After many pleasant adventures during the six months spent in the city, our party came sailing home again all the better for the trip, and Annie so full of tales to tell that it was a never-failing source of amusement to hear her hold forth to her younger brother in her pretty way, "splaining and 'scribing all about it."

Grandmamma's promise was faithfully kept, and Annie brooded blissfully over the twenty-five dolls till they were dressed, packed, and sent away to Fayal. A letter of thanks soon came back from the teacher, telling how surprised and delighted the

girls were, and how they talked of Annie as if she were a sort of fairy princess who in return for two poor rag-babies sent a miraculous shower of splendid china ladies with gay gowns and smiling faces.

This childish charity was made memorable to all who knew of it by the fact that three months after she came home from that happy voyage Annie took the one from which there is no return. For this journey there was needed no preparation but a little white gown, a coverlet of flowers, and the casket where the treasure of many hearts was tenderly laid away. All alone, but not afraid, little Annie crossed the unknown sea that rolls between our world and the Islands of the Blest, to be welcomed there, I am sure, by spirits as innocent as her own, leaving behind her a very precious memory of her budding virtues and the relics of a short, sweet life.

Every one mourned for her, and all her small treasures were so carefully kept that they still exist. Poor Horta, in the pincushion arm-chair, seems waiting patiently for the little mamma to come again; the two rag-dolls lie side by side in grand-

ma s scrap-book, since there is now no happy voice to wake them into life; and far away in the convent of San Antonio the orphans carefully keep their pretty gifts in memory of the sweet giver. To them she is a saint now, not a fairy princess; for when they heard of her death they asked if they might pray for the soul of the dear little Americana, and the teacher said, "Pray rather for the poor mother who has lost so much." So the grateful orphans prayed and the mother was comforted, for now another little daughter lies in her arms and kisses away the lonely pain at her heart.

The second small traveller I want to tell about lived in the same city as the first, and her name was Maggie Woods. Her father was an Englishman who came to America to try his fortune, but did not find it; for when Maggie was three months old, the great Chicago fire destroyed their home; soon after, the mother died; then the father was drowned, and Maggie was left all alone in a strange country.

She had a good aunt in England, however, who took great pains to discover the child after the death

of the parents, and sent for her to come home and be cared for. It was no easy matter to get a five-years' child across the Atlantic, for the aunt could not come to fetch her, and no one whom she knew was going over. But Maggie had found friends in Chicago; the American consul at Manchester was interested in the case, and every one was glad to help the forlorn baby, who was too young to understand the pathos of her story.

After letters had gone to and fro, it was decided to send the child to England in charge of the captain of a steamer, trusting to the kindness of all fellow-travellers to help her on her way.

The friends in Chicago bestirred themselves to get her ready, and then it was that Annie's mother found that she could do something which would have delighted her darling, had she been here to know of it. Laid tenderly away were many small garments belonging to the other little pilgrim, whose journeying was so soon ended; and from among all these precious things Mrs. Percival carefully chose a comfortable outfit for that cold March voyage.

The little gray gown went, and the red hood, the warm socks, and the cosey wraps no longer needed by the quiet sleeper under the snow. Perhaps something of her loving nature lingered about the clothes, and helped to keep the orphan warm and safe, for Annie's great delight was to pet and help all who needed comfort and protection.

When all was ready, Maggie's small effects were packed in a light basket, so that she could carry it herself if need be. A card briefly telling the story was fastened on the corner, and a similar paper recommending her to the protection of all kind people, was sewed to the bosom of her frock. Then, not in the least realizing what lay before her, the child was consigned to the conductor of the train to be forwarded to persons in New York who would see her safely on board the steamer.

I should dearly like to have seen the little maid and the big basket as they set out on that long trip as tranquilly as if for a day's visit; and it is a comfort to know that before the train started, the persons who took her there had interested a motherly lady in the young traveller, who promised to watch over her while their ways were the same.

All went well, and Maggie was safely delivered to the New York friends, who forwarded her to the steamer, well supplied with toys and comforts for the voyage, and placed in charge of captain and stewardess. She sailed on the 3d of March, and on the 12th landed at Liverpool, after a pleasant trip, during which she was the pet of all on board.

The aunt welcomed her joyfully, and the same day the child reached her new home, the Commercial Inn, Compstall, after a journey of over four thousand miles. The consul and owners of the steamer wanted to see the adventurous young lady who had come so far alone, and neighbors and strangers made quite a lion of her, for all kindly hearts were interested, and the protective charity which had guided and guarded her in two hemispheres and across the wide sea, made all men fathers, all women mothers, to the little one till she was safe.

Her picture lies before me as I write, — a pretty child standing in a chair, with a basket of toys on the table before her; curly hair pushed back from the face, pensive eyes, and a pair of stout little feet

crossed one over the other as if glad to rest. I wish I could put the photograph into the story, because the small heroine is an interesting one, and still lives with the good aunt, who is very fond and proud of her, and writes pleasant accounts of her progress to the friends in America.

So ends the journey of my second small traveller, and when I think of her safe and happy in a good home, I always fancy that (if such things may be) in the land which is lovelier than even beautiful old England, Maggie's mother watches over little Annie

III.

A JOLLY FOURTH.

DOOR-STEP parties were the fashion that year and it was while a dozen young folks sat chatting on Annie Hadwin's steps in the twilight that they laid the plan which turned out such a grand success in the end.

"For my part, I am glad we are to be put on a short allowance of gunpowder, and that crackers are forbidden, they are such a nuisance, burning holes in clothes, frightening horses, and setting houses afire," said sober Fred from the gate, where he and several other fellows were roosting socially together.

"It won't seem a bit like a regular Fourth without the salutes three times during the day. They are afraid the old cannon will kick, and blow off some other fellow's arm, as it did last year," added Elly Dickens, the beau of the party, as he pulled

down his neat wristbands, hoping Maud admired the new cuff-buttons in them.

"What shall we do in the evening, since the ball is given up? Just because the old folks are too tired to enjoy dancing, we can't have any, and I think it is too bad," said pretty Belle, impatiently, for she danced like a fairy and was never tired.

"The authorities didn't dare to stop our races in the morning. There would have been an insurrection if they had," called out long Herbert from the grass, where he lay at the feet of black-eyed Julia.

"We *must* do something to finish off with. Come, somebody suggest a new, nice, safe, and jolly plan for the evening," cried Grace, who liked fun, and had just slipped a little toad into Jack Spratt's pocket as a pleasant surprise when he felt for his handkerchief.

"Let us offer a prize for the brightest idea. Five minutes for meditation, then all suggest a plan, and the best one shall be adopted," proposed Annie, glad to give a lively turn to her party.

All agreed, and sudden silence followed the

chatter, broken now and then by an exclamation of "I've got it! No, I haven't," which produced a laugh at the impetuous party.

"Time's up," announced Fred, looking at "the turnip," as his big old-fashioned watch was called. Every one had a proposal more or less original, and much discussion followed; but it was finally decided that Herbert's idea of floating about in boats to enjoy the fireworks on the hill would be romantic, reposeful, and on the whole satisfactory.

"Each boat might have a colored lantern; that would look pretty, and then there would be no danger of running into our neighbors in the dark," said Annie, who was a little timid on the water in a wherry.

"Why not have lots, and make a regular 'feast of lanterns,' as they do in China? I was reading about it the other day, and can show you how to do it. Won't it be gay?" And Fred the bookworm nearly tumbled off his perch, as an excited gesture emptied his pockets of the library books which served as ballast.

"Yes! yes!" cried the other lads, with various

demonstrations of delight as the new fancy grew upon their lively minds.

"Fred and Annie must have the prize, for their idea is the most brilliant one. Nan can give the flag to the winner of the race, and 'Deacon' can lead the boats, for *I* think it would be fine to have a procession on the river. Fireworks are an old story, so let us surprise the town by something regularly splendid," proposed Elly, fired in his turn with a bright idea.

"We will! we will!" cried the rest, and at once plunged into the affair with all the ardor of their years.

"Let us dress up," said Julia, who liked theatricals.

"In different characters," added Maud, thinking how well her long yellow hair would look as a mermaid.

"And all sing as we go under the bridges," put in Annie, who adored music.

"What a pity the boats can't dance, it would be so lovely to see them waltzing round like fireflies!" said Belle, still longing for the ball.

"A lot of fellows are coming up to spend the day with us, and we ought to have some sort o. a picnic; city folks think so much of such things," said Herbert the hospitable, for his house and barn were the favorite resorts of all his mates, and three gentle little sisters always came into his plans if possible.

"I 've got two girl cousins coming, and they would like it, I guess. I should any way, for Jack will go tagging after Grace and leave me to take care of them. Let 's have a picnic, by all means," said lazy Fred, who thought all girls but one great plagues.

"I shouldn't wonder if all our people liked that plan, and we might have a town picnic as we did once before. Let every one ask his or her mother, and see if we can't do it," suggested Annie, eager for a whole day of merry-making.

The door-step party was late in breaking up that night; and if half the plans proposed had been carried out, that town would have been considered a large lunatic asylum. Wiser heads remodelled the wild plans, however, and more skilful hands lent their aid, so that only the possible was attempted, though the older folks had bright ideas as well as

the boys and girls, and gave the finishing touches to the affair.

The Fourth was a fine day, with a fresh air, cloudless sky, and no dust. The town was early astir, though neither sunrise cannon nor the Antiques and Horribles disturbed the dawn with their clamor. The bells rang merrily, and at eight all flocked to the Town Hall to hear the Declaration of Independence read by the good and great man of the town, whose own wise and noble words go echoing round the world, teaching the same lesson of justice, truth, and courage as that immortal protest. An Ode by the master of the revels was sung, then every one shouted America with hearty good-will, and before the echoes had fairly died away, the crowd streamed forth to the river-side; for these energetic people were bound to make a day of it.

At nine the races began, and both green banks of the stream were lined with gay groups eagerly watching "our boys" as they swept by in wherries, paddled in canoes, or splashed and tumbled in and out of their tubs amid shouts of laughter from the spectators. The older fellows did the scientific, and their

prizes were duly awarded by the judges. But our young party had their share of fun, and Fred and Herbert, who were chums in everything, won the race for the little flag yearly given to the lads for any success on the river. Then the weary heroes loaded the big dory with a cargo of girls, and with the banner blowing gayly in the wind, rowed away to the wide meadow, where seven oaks cast shade enough to shelter a large picnic. And a large one they had, for the mammas took kindly to the children's suggestion, agreeing to club together in a social lunch, each contributing her stores, her family, and her guests, all being happy together in the free and easy way so pleasant and possible in summer weather.

A merry company they were, and it was a comfortable sight to see the tired fathers lying in the shade, while the housewives forgot their cares for a day, the young folks made table-setting and dish-washing a joke by doing it together, and the children frolicked to their hearts' content. Even the babies were trundled to the party by proud mammas and took naps in their carriages, or held receptions

for admiring friends and neighbors with infantile dignity.

A social, sensible time, and when sunset came all turned homeward to make ready for the evening festivities. It was vaguely rumored that the pretty rustic bridge was to be illuminated, for the older people had taken up the idea and had *their* surprises ready as well as the young folks. A band was stationed by the river-side, a pretty villa on the hill blazed out with lines of light, and elms and apple-trees bore red and golden lanterns, like glorified fruit. The clerk of the weather was evidently interested in this novel entertainment, for the evening was windless, dark, and cool, so the arch of light that spanned the shadowy river shone splendidly Fireworks soared up from the hill-top beyond, fireflies lent their dancing sparks to illuminate the meadows, and the three bridges were laden with the crowds, who greeted each new surprise with cries of admiration.

Higher up the stream, where two branches met about a rocky island, elves seemed gathering for a summer reve'.

From all the landings that lined either shore brilliant boats glided to the rendezvous; some hung with luminous globes of blue and silver, some with lanterns fiery-red, flower-shaped, golden, green, or variegated, as if a rainbow were festooned about the viewless masts. Up and down they flashed, stealing out from dusky nooks and floating in their own radiance, as they went to join the procession that wound about the island like a splendid sea-serpent uncoiling itself from sleep and darkness.

"Isn't it beautiful?" cried even the soberest of the townsfolk, as all turned their backs on the shining bridge and bursting rockets to admire the new spectacle, which was finer than its most enthusiastic advocate expected. All felt proud of their success as they looked, and even the children forgot to shout while watching the pretty pageant that presently came floating by, with music, light, and half seen figures so charming, grotesque, or romantic that the illusion was complete.

First, a boat so covered with green boughs and twinkling yellow sparks that it looked like a floating island by starlight or a cage of singing-birds, for

music came from within and fresh voices, led by Annie, sang sweetly as it sailed along. Then a gondola of lovely Venetian ladies, rowed by the handsome artist, who was the pride of the town. Next a canoe holding three dusky Indians, complete in war-paint, wampum, and tomahawks, paddled before the brilliant barge in which Cleopatra sat among red cushions, fanned by two pretty maids. Julia's black eyes sparkled as she glanced about her, feeling very queen-like with a golden crown on her head, all the jewelry she could muster on her neck and arms, and grandmother's yellow brocade shining in the light. Belle and Grace waved their peacock fans like two comely little Egyptian damsels, and the many-colored lanterns made a pretty picture of the whole.

A boatful of jolly little tars followed, with Tom Brown, Jr., as skipper. Then a party of fairies in white, with silver wings and wands, and lanterns like moon and stars.

Lou Pope, as Lady of the Lake, rowed her own boat, with Jack for a droll little Harper, twanging his zitter for want of a better instrument.

A black craft hung with lurid red lanterns and manned by a crew of ferocious pirates in scarlet shirts, dark beards, and an imposing display of pistols and cutlasses in their belts, not to mention the well-known skull and cross-bones on the flag flying at the masthead, produced a tremendous effect as the crew clashed their arms and roared the bloodthirstiest song they could find. All the boys cheered that, and all the horses pranced as the pirates fired off their pistols, causing timid ladies to shriek, and prudent drivers to retire from the bridges with their carriage-loads of company.

A Chinese junk (or what was intended to look like one, but really resembled a mud-scow), with a party of Mandarins, rich in fans, umbrellas, and pigtails, taking tea on board in a blaze of fantastic lanterns, delighted the children.

Then a long low boat came sliding by softly, lighted with pale blue lamps, and on a white couch lay "Elaine," the letter in her hand, the golden hair streaming to her knees, and at her feet the dwarf sorrowfully rowing her down to Camelot. Every one recognized that, for the master of the

revels got it up as no one else could; and Maud laughed to herself as the floating tableau went under the bridge, and she heard people rushing to the other side, waiting eagerly to see the "lily maid" appear and glide away, followed by applause, as one of the prettiest sights seen that night.

There were eighty boats in all, and as the glittering train wound along the curves of the river smooth and dark as a mirror, the effect was truly beautiful, especially when they all congregated below the illuminated bridge, making an island of many-colored light. An enchanted island it seemed to lookers-on, for music and laughter came from it, and a strange mixture of picturesque faces and figures flitted to and fro.

Elaine sat up and ate bonbons with the faithful dwarf; Ellen Douglas ducked the Harper; the Chinamen invited Cleopatra to tea; the mermaids pelted the pirates with water-lilies; the gallant gondolier talked art with the Venetian ladies; and the jolly little tars danced hornpipes, regardless of danger; while the three Indians, Fred, Herbert, and Elly, whooped and tomahawked right and left as if on the war-path.

A regular Midsummer Night's Dream frolic, which every one enjoyed heartily, while the band played patriotic airs, the pretty villa shone like a fairy palace, and the sky was full of dazzling meteors, falling stars, and long-tailed comets, as the rockets whizzed and blazed from the hill-tops.

Just as the fun was at its height the hurried clang of a bell startled the merry-makers, and a cry of "Fire!" came from the town, causing a general stampede. "Post-office all afire! Men wanted!" shouted a breathless boy, racing through the crowd toward the river. Then great was the scampering, for shops stood thickly all about the post-office, and distracted merchants hastily collected their goods, while the firemen smashed windows, ran up and down ladders, broke in doors, and poured streams of water with generous impartiality over everybody and everything in the neighborhood, and the boys flew about, as if this unexpected display of fireworks suited them exactly.

Such noble exertions could not fail of success, and the fire was happily extinguished before the river was pumped dry. Then every one went home,

and, feeling the need of refreshment after their labors, had supper all over again, to the great delight of the young folks, who considered this a most appropriate finish to an exciting day.

But the merriest party of all was the one gathered on Fred's piazza to eat cake and talk over the fun. Such a droll group as they were. The Indians were sadly dilapidated as to feathers and paint, beside being muddy to the knees, having landed in hot haste. Poor Cleopatra had deen drenched by the hose, but though very damp still sparkled with unextinguishable gayety. Elaine had tied herself up in a big shawl, having lost her hat overboard. Jack and Grace wore one waterproof, and Annie was hoarse with leading her choir of birds on the floating island. Also several of the pirates wore their beards twisted round behind for the sake of convenience in eating.

All were wet, warm, and weary, but all rejoiced over the success of the day's delights, and it was unanimously agreed that this had been the jolliest Fourth they had ever known.

IV.

SEVEN BLACK CATS.

THEY all came uninvited, they all led eventful lives, and all died tragical deaths; so out of the long list of cats whom I have loved and lost, these seven are the most interesting and memorable.

I have no prejudice against color, but it so happened that our pussies were usually gray or maltese. One white one, who *would* live in the coal-bin, was a failure, and we never repeated the experiment. Black cats had not been offered us, so we had no experience of them till number one came to us in this wise.

Sitting at my window, I saw a very handsome puss come walking down the street in the most composed and dignified manner. I watched him with interest, wondering where he was going.

Pausing now and then, he examined the houses as he passed, as if looking for a particular number,

till, coming to our gate, he pushed it open, and walked in. Straight up to the door he came, and finding it shut sat down to wait till some one opened it for him.

Much amused, I went at once, and he came directly in, after a long stare at me, and a few wavings of his plumy tail. It was evidently the right place, and, following me into the parlor, he perched himself on the rug, blinked at the fire, looked round the room, washed his face, and then, lying down in a comfortable sprawl, he burst into a cheerful purr, as if to say, —

"It's all right; the place suits me, and I'm going to stay."

His coolness amused me very much, and his beauty made me glad to keep him. He was not a common cat, but, as we afterward discovered, a Russian puss. His fur was very long, black, and glossy as satin; his tail like a graceful plume, and his eyes as round and yellow as two little moons. His paws were very dainty, and white socks and gloves, with a neat collar and shirt-bosom, gave him the appearance of an elegant young beau, in full

evening dress. His face was white, with black hair parted in the middle; and whiskers, fiercely curled up at the end, gave him a martial look.

Every one admired him, and a vainer puss never caught a mouse. If he saw us looking at him, he instantly took an attitude; gazed pensively at the fire, as if unconscious of our praises; crouched like a tiger about to spring, and glared, and beat the floor with his tail; or lay luxuriously outstretched, rolling up his yellow eyes with a sentimental expression that was very funny.

We named him the Czar, and no tyrannical emperor of Russia ever carried greater desolation and terror to the souls of his serfs, than this royal cat did to the hearts and homes of the rats and mice over whom he ruled.

The dear little mice who used to come out to play so confidingly in my room, live in my best bonnet-box, and bring up their interesting young families in the store-room, now fell an easy prey to the Czar, who made nothing of catching half a dozen a day.

Brazen-faced old rats, gray in sin, who used to walk boldly in and out of the front door, ravage our

closets, and racket about the walls by night, now paused in their revels, and felt that their day was over. Czar did not know what fear was, and flew at the biggest, fiercest rat that dared to show his long tail on the premises. He fought many a gallant fight, and slew his thousands, always bringing his dead foe to display him to us, and receive our thanks.

It was sometimes rather startling to find a large rat reposing in the middle of your parlor; not always agreeable to have an excited cat bounce into your lap, lugging a half-dead rat in his mouth; or to have visitors received by the Czar, tossing a mouse on the door-steps, like a playful child with its cup and ball.

He was not fond of petting, but allowed one or two honored beings to cuddle him. My work-basket was his favorite bed, for a certain fat cushion suited him for a pillow, and, having coolly pulled out all the pins, the rascal would lay his handsome head on the red mound, and wink at me with an irresistibly saucy expression that made it impossible to scold.

All summer we enjoyed his pranks and admired his manly virtues; but in the winter we lost him, for, alas! he found his victor in the end, and fell a victim to his own rash daring.

One morning after a heavy snow-fall, Czar went out to take a turn up and down the path. As he sat with his back to the gate, meditatively watching some doves on the shed-roof, a big bull-dog entered the yard, and basely attacked him in the rear. Taken by surprise, the dear fellow did his best, and hit out bravely, till he was dragged into the deep snow where he could not fight, and there so cruelly maltreated that he would have been murdered out right, if I had not gone to the rescue.

Catching up a broom, I belabored the dog so energetically that he was forced to turn from the poor Czar to me. What would have become of me I don't know, for the dog was in a rage, and evidently meditating a grab at my ankles, when his master appeared and ordered him off.

Never was a boy better scolded than that one, for I poured forth vials of wrath upon his head as I took up my bleeding pet, and pointed to his wounds as indignantly as Antony did to Cæsar's.

The boy fled affrighted, and I bore my poor Czar in to die. All day he lay on his cushion, patient and quiet, with his torn neck tied up in a soft bandage, a saucer of cream close by, and an afflicted mistress to tend and stroke him with tender lamentations.

We had company in the evening, and my interesting patient was put into another room. Once, in the midst of conversation, I thought I heard a plaintive mew, but could not go to see, and soon forgot all about it; but when the guests left, my heart was rent by finding Czar stretched out before the door quite dead.

Feeling death approach, he had crept to say good-by, and with a farewell mew had died before the closed door, a brave and faithful cat to the end.

He was buried with great pomp, and before his grave was green, little Blot came to take his place, though she never filled it. Blot's career was a sad and brief one. Misfortune marked her for its own, and life was one too many for her.

I saw some boys pelting a wretched object with mud I delivered a lecture on cruelty to animals

confiscated the victim, and, wrapping her in a news paper, bore the muddy little beast away in triumph. Being washed and dried, she turned out a thin black kit, with dirty blue bows tied in her ears As I don't approve of ear-rings, I took hers out, and tried to fatten her up, for she was a forlorn creature at first.

But Blot would not grow plump. Her early wrongs preyed upon her, and she remained a thin, timid, melancholy little cat all her days. I could not win her confidence. She had lost her faith in mankind, and I don't blame her. She always hid in corners, quaked when I touched her, took her food by stealth, and sat in a forlorn bunch in cold nooks, down cellar or behind the gate, mewing despondently to herself, as if her woes must find a vent. She would *not* be easy and comfortable. No cushion could allure, no soft beguilements win her to purr no dainty fare fill out her rusty coat, no warmth or kindness banish the scared look from her sad green eyes, no ball or spool lure her to play, or cause her to wag her mortified thin tail with joy.

Poor, dear little Blot! She was a pathetic spec-

tacle, and her end was quite in keeping with the rest of her hard fate. Trying one day to make her come and be cuddled, she retreated to the hearth, and when I pursued her, meaning to catch and pet her, she took a distracted skip right into a bed of hot coals. One wild howl, and another still more distracted skip brought her out again, to writhe in agony with four burnt paws and a singed skin.

"We must put the little sufferer out of her pain," said a strong-minded friend; and quenched little Blot's life and suffering together in a pail of water.

I laid her out sweetly in a nice box, with a doll's blanket folded round her, and, bidding the poor dear a long farewell, confided her to old MacCarty for burial. He was my sexton, and I could trust him to inter my darlings decently, and not toss them disrespectfully into a dirt-cart or over a bridge.

My dear Mother Bunch was an entire contrast to Blot. Such a fat, cosey old mamma you never saw, and her first appearance was so funny, I never think of her without laughing.

In our back kitchen was an old sideboard, with two little doors in the lower part. Some bits of car-

pet were kept there, but we never expected to let that small mansion till, opening the door one day, I found Mrs. Bunch and her young family comfortably settled.

I had never seen this mild black cat before, and I fancy no one had ever seen her three roly-poly, jet-black kits. Such a confiding puss I never met, for when I started back, surprised, Mrs. Bunch merely looked at me with an insinuating purr, and began to pick at my carpet, as if to say,—

"The house suited me; I'll take it, and pay rent by allowing you to admire and pet my lovely babies."

I never thought of turning her out, and there she remained for some months, with her children growing up around her, all as fat and funny, black and amiable, as herself.

Three jollier kits were never born, and a more devoted mother never lived. I put her name on the door of her house, and they lived on most comfortably together, even after they grew too big for their accommodations, and tails and legs hung out after the family had retired.

I really did hope they would escape the doom that seemed to pursue my cats, but they did not, for all came to grief in different ways. Cuddle Bunch had a fit, and fell out of the window, killing herself instantly. Othello, her brother, was shot by a bad boy, who fired pistols at all the cats in the neighborhood, as good practice for future gunning expeditions.

Little Purr was caught in a trap, set for a woodchuck, and so hurt she had to be gently chloroformed out of life. Mother Bunch still remained, and often used to go and sit sadly under the tree where her infants were buried, — an afflicted, yet resigned parent.

Her health declined, but we never had the heart to send her away, and it wouldn't have done any good if we had tried. We did it once, and it was a dead failure. At one time the four cats were so wearing that my honored father, who did not appreciate the dears, resolved to clear the house of the whole family; so he packed them in a basket, and carried them "over the hills and far away," like the "Babes in the Wood." Coming to a lonely spot, he

let them out, and returned home, much relieved in mind. Judge of his amazement when the first thing he saw was Mrs. Bunch and her children, sitting on the steps resting after their run home.

We all laughed at the old gentleman so that he left them in peace, and even when the mamma alone remained, feeble and useless, her bereavement made her sacred.

When we shut up the house, and went to the city for the winter, we gave Mother Bunch to the care of a kind neighbor, who promised to guard her faithfully. Returning in the spring, one of my first questions was, —

"How is old Pussy?"

Great was my anguish when my neighbor told me that she was no more. It seems the dear thing pined for her old home, and kept returning to it in spite of age or bad weather.

Several times she was taken back when she ran away, but at last they were tired of fussing over her, and let her go. A storm came on, and when they went to see what had become of her, they found her frozen, in the old sideboard, where I first discovered her with her kits about her.

As a delicate attention to me, Mrs. Bunch's skin was preserved, and presented when the tale was told. I kept it some time, but the next Christmas I made it into muffs for several dolls, who were sent me to dress; and very nice little muffs the pretty black fur made, lined with cherry silk, and finished off with tiny tassels.

I loved the dear old puss, but I knew the moths would get her skin if I kept it, and preferred to rejoice the hearts of several small friends with dolls in full winter costume. I am sure Mrs. Bunch would have agreed with me, and not felt that I treated her remains with disrespect.

The last of my cats was the blackest of all, and such a wild thing we called him the Imp. He tumbled into the garret one day through a broken scuttle, and took possession of the house from that time forth, acting as if bewitched.

He got into the furnace pipes, but could not get out, and kept me up one whole night, giving him air and light, food and comfort, through a little hole in the floor while waiting for a carpenter to come and saw him out.

He got a sad pinch in his tail, which made it crooked forever after. He fell into the soft-soap barrel, and was fished out a deplorable spectacle. He was half strangled by a fine collar we put on him, and was found hanging by it on a peg.

People sat down on him, for he would lie in chairs. No one loved him much, for he was not amiable in temper, but bit and scratched if touched, worried the bows off our slippers in his play, and if we did not attend to him at once, he complained in the most tremendous bass growl I ever heard.

He was not beautiful, but very impressive; being big, without a white hair on him. One eye was blue and one green, and the green one was always half shut, as if he was winking at you, which gave him a rowdy air comical to see. Then he swaggered in his walk, never turned out for any one, and if offended fell into rages fit to daunt the bravest soul.

Yes, the Imp was truly an awful animal; and when a mischievous cousin of ours told us he wanted a black cat, without a single white hair on it, to win a wager with, we at once offered ours.

It seems that sailors are so superstitious they will

not sail in a ship with a black cat; and this rogue of a cousin was going to send puss off on a voyage, unknown to any one but the friend who took him, and when the trip was safely over, he was to be produced as a triumphant proof of the folly of the nautical superstition.

So the Imp was delivered to his new master, and sailed away packed up in an old fishing-basket, with his head poked out of a hole in the cover.

We waited anxiously to hear how the joke ended; but unfortunately the passage was very rough, his guardian too ill to keep him safe and quiet, so the irrepressible fellow escaped from prison, and betrayed himself by growling dismally, as he went lurching across the deck to the great dismay of the sailors.

They chased, caught, and tossed the poor Imp overboard without loss of time. And when the joke came out, they had the best of it, for the weather happened to improve, and the rest of the voyage was prosperous. So, of course, they laid it all to the loss of the cat, and were more fixed in their belief than ever.

We were sorry that poor old Imp met so sad a fate, but did not mourn him long, for he had not won our hearts as some of our other pets had.

He was the last of the seven black cats, and we never had another; for I really did feel as if there was something uncanny about them after my tragical experiences with Czar, Blot, Mother Bunch's family, and the martyred Imp.

V.

ROSA'S TALE.

"NOW, I believe every one has had a Christmas present and a good time. Nobody has been forgotten, not even the cat," said Mrs. Ward to her daughter, as she looked at Pobbylinda, purring on the rug, with a new ribbon round her neck and the remains of a chicken bone between her paws.

It was very late, for the Christmas-tree was stripped, the little folks abed, the baskets and bundles left at poor neighbors' doors, and everything ready for the happy day which would begin as the clock struck twelve. They were resting after their labors, while the yule log burned down; but the mother's words reminded Belinda of one good friend who had received no gift that night.

"We've forgotten Rosa! Her mistress is away, but she *shall* have a present nevertheless. Late as

it is, she will like some apples and cake and a Merry Christmas from the family."

Belinda jumped up as she spoke, and, having collected such remnants of the feast as a horse would relish, she put on her hood, lighted a lantern, and trotted off to the barn.

As she opened the door of the loose box in which Rosa was kept, she saw her eyes shining in the dark as she lifted her head with a startled air. Then, recognizing a friend, she rose and came rustling through the straw to greet her late visitor. She was evidently much pleased with the attention, and rubbed her nose against Miss Belinda gratefully, but seemed rather dainty, and poked over the contents of the basket, as if a little suspicious, though apples were her favorite treat.

Knowing that she would enjoy the little feast more if she had company while she ate it, for Rosa was a very social beast, Miss Belinda hung up the lantern, and, sitting down on an inverted bucket, watched her as she munched contentedly.

"Now really," said Miss Belinda, when telling her story afterwards, "I am not sure whether I took a

nap and dreamed what follows, or whether it actually happened, for strange things do occur at Christmas time, as every one knows.

"As I sat there the town clock struck twelve, and the sound reminded me of the legend which affirms that all dumb animals are endowed with speech for one hour after midnight on Christmas eve, in memory of the animals about the manger when the blessed Child was born.

"'I wish the pretty fancy was a fact, and our Ross could speak, if only for an hour, because I am sure she has an interesting history, and I long to know it.'

"I said this aloud, and to my utter amazement the bay mare stopped eating, fixed her intelligent eyes upon my face, and answered in a language I understood perfectly well,—

"'You shall know it, for whether the legend is true or not I feel as if I could confide in you and tell you all I feel. I was lying awake listening to the fun in the house, thinking of my dear mistress over the sea and feeling very sad, for I heard you say I was to be sold. That nearly broke my heart,

promised so well that when he died I brought a great price. I mourned for him, but was glad to be sent to my new owner's racing-stable and made much of, for people predicted that I should be another Goldsmith Maid or Flora Temple. Ah, how ambitious and proud I was in those days! Vain of my good blood, my speed, and my beauty; for indeed I *was* handsome then, though you may find it hard to believe now.' And Rosa sighed regretfully as she stole a look at me, and took the attitude which showed to advantage the fine lines about her head and neck.

"'I do not find it hard, for we have always said you had splendid points about you. Miss Merry saw them, though you were a skeleton, when she bought you; so did the skilful Cornish blacksmith when he shod you. And it is easy to see that you belong to a good family by the way you hold your head without a check-rein and carry your tail like a plume,' I said, with a look of admiration which comforted her as much as if she had been a *passée* belle.

"'I must hurry over this part of my story, because,

though brilliant, it was very brief, and ended in a way which made it the bitterest portion of my life,' continued Rosa. 'I won several races, and great fame was predicted for me. You may guess how high my reputation was when I tell you that before my last fatal trial thousands were bet on me, and my rival trembled in his shoes. I was full of spirit, eager to show my speed and sure of success. Alas, how little I knew of the wickedness of human nature then, how dearly I bought the knowledge, and how it has changed my whole life! You do not know much about such matters, of course, and I won't digress to tell you all the tricks of the trade; only beware of jockeys and never bet.

"'I was kept carefully out of every one's way for weeks, and only taken out for exercise by my trainer. Poor Bill! I was fond of him, and he was so good to me that I never have forgotten him, though he broke his neck years ago. A few nights before the great race, as I was getting a good sleep, carefully tucked away in my roomy stall, some one stole in and gave me a warm mash. It was dark

I was half awake, and I ate it like a fool, though I knew by instinct that it was not Bill who fed it to me. I was a confiding creature then, and as all sorts of queer things had been done to prepare me I thought it was all right. But it was not, and that deceit has caused me to be suspicious about my food ever since, for the mash was dosed in some way; it made me very ill, and my enemies nearly triumphed, thanks to this cowardly trick.

"'Bill worked over me day and night, that I might be fit to run. I did my best to seem well and gay, but there was not time for me to regain my lost strength and spirit, and pride alone kept me up. "I 'll win for my master if I die in doing it," I said to myself, and when the hour came pranced to my place trying to look as well as ever, though my heart was very heavy and I trembled with excitement. "Courage, my lass, and we 'll beat in spite of their black tricks," whispered Bill, as he sprung to his place.

"'I lost the first heat, but won the second, and the sound of the cheering gave me strength to walk away without staggering, though my legs shook

under me. What a splendid minute that was when, encouraged and refreshed by my faithful Bill, I came on the track again! I knew my enemies began to fear, for I had borne myself so bravely they fancied I was quite well, and now, excited by that first success, I was mad with impatience to be off and cover myself with glory.'

"Rosa looked as if the 'splendid minute' had come again, for she arched her neck, opened wide her red nostrils, and pawed the straw with one little foot, while her eyes shone with sudden fire, and her ears were pricked up as if to catch again the shouts she heard that day.

"'I wish I had been there to see you!' I exclaimed, quite carried away by her ardor.

"'I wish you had, for I won, I won! The big black horse did his best, but I had vowed to win or die, and I kept my word, for I beat him by a head, and then dropped as if dead. I might as well have died then, people thought, for the poison, the exertion, and the fall ruined me for a racer. My master cared no more for me, and would have had me shot if Bill had not saved my life. I was pronounced

good for nothing, and he bought me cheap. I was lame and useless for a long time, but his patient care did wonders, and just as I was able to be of use to him he was killed.

"'A gentleman in want of a saddle-horse purchased me because my easy gait and quiet temper suited him; for I was meek enough now, and my size fitted me to carry his delicate daughter.

"'For more than a year I served little Miss Alice, rejoicing to see how rosy her pale cheeks became, how upright her feeble figure grew, thanks to the hours spent with me; for my canter rocked her as gently as if she were in a cradle, and fresh air was the medicine she needed. She often said she owed her life to me, and I liked to think so, for she made *my* life a very easy one.

"'But somehow my good times never lasted long, and when Miss Alice went West I was sold. I had been so well treated that I *looked* as handsome and gay as ever, though my shoulder never was strong again, and I often had despondent moods, longing for the excitement of the race-course with the instinct of my kind; so I was glad when, attracted by my

spirit and beauty, a young army officer bought me and I went to the war. Ah! you never guessed that, did you? Yes, I did my part gallantly and saved my master's life more than once. You have observed how martial music delights me, but you don't know that it is because it reminds me of the proudest hour of my life. I've told you about the saddest; let me relate this also, and give me a pat for the brave action which won my master his promotion, though I got no praise for my part of the achievement.

"'In one of the hottest battles my captain was ordered to lead his men to a most perilous exploit. They hesitated, so did he; for it must cost many lives, and, brave as they were, they paused an instant. But *I* settled the point, for I was wild with the sound of drums, the smell of powder, the excitement of the hour, and, finding myself sharply reined in, I rebelled, took the bit between my teeth, and dashed straight away into the midst of the fight, spite of all my rider could do. The men thought their captain led them on, and with a cheer they followed, carrying all before them.

"'What happened just after that I never could remember, except that I got a wound here in my neck and a cut on my flank; the scar is there still, and I'm proud of it, though buyers always consider it a blemish. But when the battle was won my master was promoted on the field, and I carried him up to the general as he sat among his officers under the torn flags.

"'Both of us were weary and wounded, both were full of pride at what we had done; but *he* got all the praise and the honor, *I* only a careless word and a better supper than usual.

"'I thought no one knew what I had done, and resented the ingratitude of your race; for it was the horse, not the man, who led that forlorn hope, and I did think I should have a rosette at least, when others got stars and bars for far less dangerous deeds. Never mind, my master knew the truth, and thanked me for my help by keeping me always with him till the sad day when he was shot in a skirmish, and lay for hours with none to watch and mourn over him but his faithful horse.

"'Then I knew how much he loved and thanked

me, for his hand stroked me while it had the strength his eye turned to me till it grew too dim for seeing, and when help came, among the last words he whispered to a comrade were these, "Be kind to Rosa and send her safely home; she has earned her rest."

"'I *had* earned it, but I did not get it, for when I was sent home the old mother's heart was broken at the loss of her son, and she did not live long to cherish me. Then my hard times began, for my next owner was a fast young man, who ill used me in many ways, till the spirit of my father rose within me, and I gave my brutal master a grand runaway and smash-up.

"'To tame me down, I was sold for a car horse; and that almost killed me, for it was dreadful drudgery to tug, day after day, over the hard pavement with heavy loads behind me, uncongenial companions beside me, and no affection to cheer my life.

"'I have often longed to ask why Mr. Bergh does not try to prevent such crowds from piling into those cars; and now I beg you to do what you can to stop such an unmerciful abuse.

"'In snow-storms it was awful, and more than one of my mates dropped dead with overwork and discouragement. I used to wish I could do the same, for my poor feet, badly shod, became so lame I could hardly walk at times, and the constant strain on the up grades brought back the old trouble in my shoulder worse than ever.

"'Why they did not kill me I don't know, for I was a miserable creature then; but there must be something attractive about me, I fancy, for people always seem to think me worth saving. What can it be, ma'am?'

"'Now, Rosa, don't be affected; you know you are a very engaging little animal, and if you live to be forty will still have certain pretty ways about you, that win the hearts of women, if not of men. *They* see your weak points, and take a money view of the case; but *we* sympathize with your afflictions, are amused with your coquettish airs, and like your affectionate nature. Now hurry up and finish, for I find it a trifle cold out here.'

"I laughed as I spoke, for Rosa eyed me with a sidelong glance and gently waved the docked tail,

which was her delight; for the sly thing liked to be flattered and was as fond of compliments as a girl.

"'Many thanks. I will come now to the most interesting portion of my narrative. As I was saying, instead of knocking me on the head I was packed off to New Hampshire, and had a fine rest among the green hills, with a dozen or so of weary friends. It was during this holiday that I acquired the love of nature which Miss Merry detected and liked in me, when she found me ready to study sunsets with her, to admire new landscapes, and enjoy bright summer weather.

"'In the autumn a livery-stable keeper bought me, and through the winter fed me up till I was quite presentable in the spring. It was a small town, but through the summer many city people visited there, so I was kept on the trot while the season lasted, because ladies could drive me. You, Miss Belinda, were one of the ladies, and I never shall forget, though I have long ago forgiven it, how you laughed at my queer gait the day you hired me.

"'My tender feet and stiff knees made me tread very gingerly, and amble along with short mincing

steps, which contrasted oddly, I know, with my proudly waving tail and high-carried head. You liked me nevertheless, because I didn't rattle you down the steep hills, was not afraid of locomotives, and stood patiently while you gathered flowers and enjoyed the lovely prospects.

"'I have always felt a regard for you since you did not whip me, and admired my eyes, which, I may say without vanity, have always been considered unusually fine. But no one ever won my whole heart like Miss Merry, and I never shall forget the happy day when she came to the stable to order a saddle-horse. Her cheery voice made me prick up my ears, and when she said, after looking at several showy beasts, "No, they don't suit me. This one now has the right air; can I ride her?" my heart danced within me and I looked round with a whinny of delight. She understood my welcome, and came right up to me, patted me, peered into my face, rubbed my nose, and looked at my feet with an air of interest and sympathy, that made me feel as if I'd like to carry her round the world.

"'Ah, what rides we had after that! What happy

hours trotting gayly through the green woods, galloping over the breezy hills, or pacing slowly along quiet lanes, where I often lunched luxuriously on clover-tops, while Miss Merry took a sketch of some picturesque bit with me in the foreground.

"'I liked that, and we had long chats at such times, for she seemed to understand me perfectly. She was never frightened when I danced for pleasure on the soft turf, never chid me when I snatched a bite from the young trees as we passed through sylvan ways, never thought it a trouble to let me wet my tired feet in babbling brooks, or to dismount and take out the stones that plagued me.

"'Then how well she rode! So firm yet light a seat, so steady a hand, so agile a foot to spring on and off, and such infectious spirits, that no matter how despondent or cross I might be, in five minutes I felt gay and young again when dear Miss Merry was on my back.'

"Here Rosa gave a frisk that sent the straw flying, and made me shrink into a corner, while she pranced about the box with a neigh which waked the big brown colt next door, and set poor Buttercup to low-

ing for her calf, the loss of which she had forgotten for a little while in sleep.

"'Ah, Miss Merry never ran away from me! She knew my heels were to be trusted, and she let me caper as I would, glad to see me lively. Never mind, Miss Belinda, come out and I'll be sober, as befits my years,' laughed Rosa, composing herself, and adding, so like a woman that I could not help smiling in the dark, —

"'When I say "years" I beg you to understand that I am *not* as old as that base man declared, but just in the prime of life for a horse. Hard usage has made me seem old before my time, and I am good for years of service yet.'

"'Few people have been through as much as you have, Rosa, and you certainly *have* earned the right to rest,' I said consolingly, for her little whims and vanities amused me much.

"'You know what happened next,' she continued; 'but I must seize this opportunity to express my thanks for all the kindness I've received since Miss Merry bought me, in spite of the ridicule and dissuasion of all her friends.

"'I know I didn't look like a good bargain, for I *was* very thin and lame and shabby; but she saw and loved the willing spirit in me, pitied my hard lot, and felt that it would be a good deed to buy me even if she never got much work out of me.

"'I shall always remember that, and whatever happens to me hereafter, I never shall be as proud again as I was the day she put my new saddle and bridle on, and I was led out, sleek, plump, and handsome, with blue rosettes at my ears, my tail cut in the English style, and on my back Miss Merry in her London hat and habit, all ready to head a cavalcade of eighteen horsemen and horsewomen. *We* were the most perfect pair of all, and when the troop caracoled down the wide street six abreast, *my* head was the highest, *my* rider the straightest, and *our* two hearts the friendliest in all the goodly company.

"'Nor is it pride and love alone that binds me to her, it is gratitude as well, for did not she often bathe my feet herself, rub me down, water me, blanket me, and daily come to see me when I was here alone for weeks in the winter time? Didn't she study horses' feet and shoes, that I might be cured if pos-

sible? Didn't she write to the famous friend of my race for advice, and drive me seven miles to get a good smith to shoe me well? Have not my poor contracted feet grown much better, thanks to the weeks of rest without shoes which she gave me? Am I not fat and handsome, and, barring the stiff knees, a very presentable horse? If I am, it is all owing to her; and for that reason I want to live and die in her service.

"'*She* doesn't want to sell me, and only bade you do it because you didn't want the care of me while she is gone. Dear Miss Belinda, please keep me! I'll eat as little as I can. I won't ask for a new blanket, though your old army one is very thin and shabby. I'll trot for you all winter, and try not to show it if I am lame. I'll do anything a horse can, no matter how humble, to earn my living, only don't, pray don't send me away among strangers who have neither interest nor pity for me!'

"Rosa had spoken rapidly, feeling that her plea must be made now or never, for before another Christmas she might be far away and speech of no use to win her wish. I was much touched, though

she was on.y a horse; for she was looking earnestly at me as she spoke, and made the last words very eloquent by preparing to bend her stiff knees and lie down at my feet. I stopped her, and answered, with an arm about her neck and her soft nose in my hand,—

"'You shall *not* be sold, Rosa! you shall go and board at Mr. Town's great stable, where you will have pleasant society among the eighty horses who usually pass the winter there. Your shoes shall be taken off, and you shall rest till March at least. The best care will be taken of you, dear, and I will come and see you; and in the spring you shall return to us, even if Miss Merry is not here to welcome you.'

"'Thanks, many, many thanks! But I wish I could do something to earn my board. I hate to be idle, though rest *is* delicious. Is there nothing I can do to repay you, Miss Belinda? Please answer quickly, for I know the hour is almost over,' cried Rosa, stamping with anxiety; for, like all her sex, she wanted the last word.

"'Yes, you can,' I cried, as a sudden idea popped

into my head. 'I'll write down what you have told me, and send the little story to a certain paper I know of, and the money I get for it will pay your board. So rest in peace, my dear; you *will* have earned your living, and may feel that your debt is paid.'

"Before she could reply the clock struck one, and a long sigh of satisfaction was all the response in her power. But we understood each other now, and cutting a lock from her mane for Miss Merry, I gave Rosa a farewell caress and went away, wondering if I had made it all up, or if she had really broken a year's silence and freed her mind.

"However that may be, here is the tale, and the sequel to it is, that the bay mare has really gone to board at a first-class stable," concluded Miss Belinda. "I call occasionally and leave my card in the shape of an apple, finding Madam Rosa living like an independent lady, with her large box and private yard on the sunny side of the barn, a kind ostler to wait upon her, and much genteel society from the city when she is inclined for company.

"What more could any reasonable horse desire?"

VI.

LUNCH.

"SISTER Jerusha, it really does wear upon me to see those dear boys eat such bad pies and stuff day after day when they ought to have good wholesome things for lunch. I actually ache to go and give each one of 'em a nice piece of bread-and-butter or one of our big cookies," said kind Miss Mehitable Plummer, taking up her knitting after a long look at the swarm of boys pouring out of the grammar school opposite, to lark about the yard, sit on the posts, or dive into a dingy little shop close by, where piles of greasy tarts and cakes lay in the window. They would not have allured any but hungry school-boys, and ought to have been labelled Dyspepsia and Headache, so unwholesome were they.

Miss Jerusha looked up from her seventeenth patchwork quilt, and answered, with a sympathetic glance over the way, —

"If we had enough to go round I 'd do it myself, and save these poor deluded dears from the bilious turns that will surely take them down before vacation comes. That fat boy is as yellow as a lemon now, and no wonder, for I 've seen him eat half a dozen dreadful turnovers for one lunch."

Both old ladies shook their heads and sighed, for they led a very quiet life in the narrow house that stood end to the street, squeezed in between two stores, looking as out of place as the good spinsters would have done among the merry lads opposite. Sitting at the front windows day after day, the old ladies had learned to enjoy watching the boys, who came and went, like bees to a hive, month by month. They had their favorites, and beguiled many a long hour speculating on the looks, manners, and probable station of the lads. One lame boy was Miss Jerusha's pet, though she never spoke to him, and a tall bright-faced fellow, who rather lorded it over the rest, quite won Miss Hetty's old heart by helping her across the street on a slippery day. They longed to mend some of the shabby clothes, to cheer up the dull discouraged ones, advise the sickly,

reprove the rude, and, most of all, feed those who persisted in buying lunch at the dirty bake-shop over the way.

The good souls were famous cooks, and had many books full of all manner of nice receipts, which they seldom used, as they lived simply and saw little company. A certain kind of molasses cookie made by their honored mother, — a renowned housewife in her time, — and eaten by the sisters as children, had a peculiar charm for them. A tin box was always kept full, though they only now and then nibbled one, and preferred to give them away to poor children, as they trotted to market each day. Many a time had Miss Hetty felt sorely tempted to treat the boys, but was a little timid, for they were rough fellows, and she regarded them much as a benevolent tabby would a party of frisky puppies.

To-day the box was full of fresh cookies, crisp, brown, and sweet; their spicy odor pervaded the room, and the china-closet door stood suggestively open. Miss Hetty's spectacles turned that way, then went back to the busy scene in the street, as if trying to get courage for the deed. Something

happened just then which decided her, and sealed the doom of the bilious tarts and their maker.

Several of the younger lads were playing marbles on the sidewalk, for Hop Scotch, Leap Frog, and friendly scuffles were going on in the yard, and no quiet spot could be found. The fat boy sat on a post near by, and, having eaten his last turnover, fell to teasing the small fellows peacefully playing at his feet. One was the shabby lame boy, who hopped to and fro with his crutch, munching a dry cracker, with now and then a trip to the pump to wash it down. He seldom brought any lunch, and seemed to enjoy this poor treat so much that the big bright-faced chap tossed him a red apple as he came out of the yard to get his hat, thrown there by the mate he had been playfully thrashing.

The lame child eyed the pretty apple lovingly, and was preparing to take the first delicious bite, when the fat youth with a dexterous kick sent it flying into the middle of the street, where a passing wheel crushed it down into the mud.

"It's a shame! He *shall* have something good! The scamp!" And with this somewhat confused

exclamation Miss Hetty threw down her work, ran to the closet, then darted to the front door, embracing the tin box, as if the house was on fire and that contained her dearest treasures.

"Sakes alive, what *is* the matter with sister?" ejaculated Miss Jerusha, going to the window just in time to see the fat boy tumble off the post as the tall lad came to the rescue, while the cripple went hopping across the street in answer to a kindly quavering voice that called out to him, —

"Come here, boy, and get a cookie, — a dozen if you want 'em."

"Sister 's done it at last!" And, inspired by this heroic example, Miss Jerusha threw up the window, saying, as she beckoned to the avenger, —

"You too, because you stood by that poor little boy. Come right over and help yourself."

Charley Howe laughed at the indignant old ladies, but, being a gentleman, took off his hat and ran across to thank them for their interest in the fray. Several other lads followed as irresistibly as flies to a honey-pot, for the tin box was suggestive of cake and they waited for no invitation.

Miss Hetty was truly a noble yet a droll sight, as she stood there, a trim little old lady, with her cap-strings flying in the wind, her rosy old face shining with good-will, as she dealt out cookies with a lavish hand, and a kind word to all.

"Here 's a nice big one for you, my dear. I don't know your name, but I do your face, and I like to see a big boy stand up for the little ones," she said, beaming at Charley as he came up.

"Thank you, ma'am. That 's a splendid one. We don't get anything so nice over there." And Charley gratefully bolted the cake in three mouthfuls, having given away his own lunch.

"No, indeed! One of these is worth a dozen of those nasty pies. I hate to see you eating them, and I don't believe your mothers know how bad they are," said Miss Hetty, diving for another handful into the depths of the box, which was half empty already.

"Wish you 'd teach old Peck how you make 'em. We 'd be glad enough to buy these and let the cockroach pies alone," said Charley, accepting another and enjoying the fun, for half the fellows were watching the scene from over the way.

"Cockroach pies! You don't mean to say?" cried Miss Hetty, nearly dropping her load in her horror at the idea, for she had heard of fricasseed frogs and roasted locusts, and thought a new delicacy had been found.

"We find 'em in the apple-sauce sometimes, and nails and bits of barrel in the cake, so some of us don't patronize Peck," replied Charley; and little Briggs the cripple added eagerly,—

"I never do; my mother won't let me."

"He never has any money, that's why," bawled Dickson, the fat boy, dodging behind the fence as he spoke.

"Never you mind, sonny, you come here every day, and *I'll* see that you have a good lunch. Apples too, *red ones*, if you like them, with your cake," answered Miss Hetty, patting his head and sending an indignant glance across the street.

"Cry-baby! Molly-coddle! Grandma's darling!" jeered Dickson, and then fled, for Charley fired a ball at him with such good aim it narrowly escaped his nose.

"That boy will have the jaundice as sure as fate,

and he deserves it," said Miss Hetty, sternly, as she dropped the lid on the now empty box; for while she was talking the free-and-easy young gentlemen had been helping themselves.

"Thank you very much, ma'am, for my cookie. I won't forget to call to-morrow." And little Briggs shook hands with as innocent a face as if his jacket pocket was not bulging in a most suspicious manner.

"You'll get your death a cold, Hetty," called Miss Jerusha, and, taking the hint, Charley promptly ended the visit.

"Sheer off, fellows. We are no end obliged, ma'am, and I'll see that Briggs isn't put upon by sneaks."

Then the boys ran off, and the old lady retired to her parlor to sink into her easy-chair, as much excited by this little feat as if she had led a forlorn hope to storm a battery.

"I'll fill both those big tins to-morrow, and treat every one of the small boys, if I'm spared," she panted, with a decided nod, as she settled her cap and composed her neat black skirts, with which the wind had taken liberties, as she stood on the steps.

"I 'm not sure it isn't our duty to make and sell good, wholesome lunches to those boys. We can afford to do it cheap, and it wouldn't be much trouble. Just put the long table across the front entry for half an hour every day, and let them come and get a bun, a cookie, or a buttered biscuit. It could be done, sister," said Miss Jerusha, longing to distinguish herself in some way also.

"It *shall* be done, sister!" And Miss Hetty made up her mind at that moment to devote some of her time and skill to rescuing those blessed boys from the unprincipled Peck and his cockroach pies.

It was pleasant, as well as droll, to see how heartily the good souls threw themselves into the new enterprise, how bravely they kept each other up when courage showed signs of failing, and how rapidly they became convinced that it was a duty to provide better food for the future defenders and rulers of their native land.

"You can't expect the dears to study with clear heads if they are not fed properly, and half the women in the world never think that what goes

into children's stomachs affects their brains," declared Miss Hetty, as she rolled out vast sheets of dough next day, emphasizing her remarks with vigorous flourishes of the rolling-pin.

"Our blessed mother understood how to feed a family. Fourteen stout boys and girls, all alive and well, and you and I as smart at seventy one and two, as most folks at forty. Good, plain victuals and plenty of 'em is the secret of firm health," responded Miss Jerusha, rattling a pan of buns briskly into the oven.

"We'd better make some Brighton Rock. It is gone out of fashion, but our brothers used to be dreadful fond of it, and boys are about alike all the world over. Ma's *resate* never fails, and it will be a new treat for the little dears."

"S'pose we have an extra can of milk left and give 'em a good mugful? Some of those poor things look as if they never got a drop. Peck sells beer, and milk is a deal better. Shall we, sister?"

"We'll try it, Jerushy. In for a penny, in for a pound."

And upon that principle the old ladies did the

thing handsomely, deferring the great event till Monday, that all might be in apple-pie order. They said nothing of it when the lads came on Friday morning, and all Saturday, which was a holiday at school, was a very busy one with them.

"Hullo! Miss Hetty *has* done it now, hasn't she? Look at that, old Peck, and tremble!" exclaimed Charley to his mates, as he came down the street on Monday morning, and espied a neat little sign on the sisters' door, setting forth the agreeable fact that certain delectable articles of food and drink could be had within at reasonable prices during recess.

No caps were at the windows, but behind the drawn curtains two beaming old faces were peeping out to see how the boys took the great announcement. Whoever remembers Hawthorne's half-comic, half-pathetic description of poor Hepsibah Pyncheon's hopes and fears, when arranging her gingerbread wares in the little shop, can understand something of the excitement of the sisters that day, as the time drew near when the first attempt was to be made.

"Who will set the door open?" said Miss Hetty when the fateful moment came, and boys began to pour out into the yard.

"I will!" And, nerving herself to the task, Miss Jerusha marched boldly round the table, set wide the door, and then, as the first joyful whoop from the boys told that the feast was in view, she whisked back into the parlor panic-stricken.

"There they come, — hundreds of them, I should think by the sound!" she whispered, as the tramp of feet came nearer, and the clamor of voices exclaiming, —

"What bully buns!" "Ain't those cookies rousers?" "New stuff too, looks first-rate." "I told you it wasn't a joke." "Wonder how Peck likes it?" "Dickson sha'n't come in." "You go first, Charley." "Here's a cent for you, Briggs; come on and trade like the rest of us."

"I'm so flurried I couldn't make change to save my life," gasped Miss Jerusha from behind the sofa, whither she had fled.

"It is *my* turn now. Be calm, and we shall soon get used to it."

Bracing herself to meet the merry chaff of the boys, as new and trying to the old lady as real danger would have been, Miss Hetty stepped forth into the hall to be greeted by a cheer, and then a chorus of demands for everything so temptingly set forth upon her table. Intrenched behind a barricade of buns, she dealt out her wares with rapidly increasing speed and skill, for as fast as one relay of lads were satisfied another came up, till the table was bare, the milk-can ran dry, and nothing was left to tell the tale but an empty water-pail and a pile of five-cent pieces.

"I hope I didn't cheat any one, but I was flurried, sister, they were so very noisy and so hungry. Bless their dear hearts; they are full now, I trust." And Miss Hetty looked over her glasses at the crumby countenances opposite, meeting many nods and smiles in return, as her late customers enthusiastically recommended her establishment to the patronage of those who had preferred Peck's questionable dainties.

"The Brighton Rock was a success; we must have a good store for to-morrow, and more milk

Briggs drank it like a baby, and your nice boy proposed my health like a little gentleman, as he is," replied Miss Jerusha, who had ventured out before it was too late, and done the honors of the can with great dignity, in spite of some inward trepidation at the astonishing feats performed with the mug.

"Peck's nose is out of joint, if I may use so vulgar an expression, and *our* lunch a triumphant success. Boys know what is good, and we need not fear to lose their custom as long as we can supply them. I shall order a barrel of flour at once, and heat up the big oven. We have put our hand to the work and must not turn back, for our honor is pledged now."

With which lofty remark Miss Hetty closed the door, trying to look utterly unconscious of the anxious Peck, who was flattening his nose against his dingy window-pane to survey his rivals over piles of unsold pastry.

The little venture *was* a success, and all that winter the old ladies did their part faithfully, finding the task more to their taste than everlasting patchwork and knitting, and receiving a fair profit on

their outlay, being shrewd managers, and rich in old-fashioned thrift, energy, and industry.

The boys revelled in wholesome fare, and soon learned to love "the Aunties," as they were called, while such of the parents as took an interest in the matter showed their approval in many ways most gratifying to the old ladies.

The final triumph, however, was the closing of Peck's shop for want of custom, for few besides the boys patronized him. None mourned for him, and Dickson proved the truth of Miss Hetty's prophecy by actually having a bilious fever in the spring.

But a new surprise awaited the boys; for when they came flocking back after the summer vacation, there stood the little shop, brave in new paint and fittings, full of all the old goodies, and over the door a smart sign, "Plummer & Co."

"By Jove, the Aunties are bound to cover themselves with glory. Let's go in and hear all about it. Behave now, you fellows, or I'll see about it afterward," commanded Charley, as he paused to peer in through the clean windows at the tempting display.

In they trooped, and, tapping on the counter, stood ready to greet the old ladies as usual, but to their great surprise a pretty young woman appeared, and smilingly asked what they would have.

"We want the Aunties, if you please. Isn't this their shop?" said little Briggs, bitterly disappointed at not finding his good friends.

"You will find them over there at home as usual. Yes, this is their shop, and I'm their niece. My husband is the Co., and we run the shop for the aunts. I hope you'll patronize us, gentlemen."

"We will! we will! Three cheers for Plummer & Co.!" cried Charley, leading off three rousers, that made the little shop ring again, and brought two caps to the opposite windows, as two cheery old faces smiled and nodded, full of satisfaction at the revolution so successfully planned and carried out.

VII.

A BRIGHT IDEA.

"NO answer to my advertisement, mamma, and I must sit with idle hands for another day," said Clara with a despondent sigh, as the postman passed the door.

"You needn't do that, child, when I 'm suffering for a new cap, and no one can suit me so well as you, if you have the spirits to do it," answered her mother from the sofa, where she spent most of her time bewailing her hard lot.

"Plenty of spirits, mamma, and what is still more necessary, plenty of materials; so I 'll toss you up 'a love of a cap' before you know it."

And putting her own disappointment out of sight, pretty Clara fell to work with such good-will that even poor, fretful Mrs. Barlow cheered up in spite of herself.

"What a mercy it is that when everything else is

swept away in this dreadful failure I still have you, dear, and no dishonest banker can rob me of my best treasure," she said fondly, as she watched her daughter with tearful eyes.

"No one shall part us, mamma; and if I can only get something to do we can be independent and happy in spite of our losses; for now the first shock and worry is over, I find a curious sort of excitement in being poor and having to work for my living. I was so tired of pleasure and idleness I really quite long to work at something, if I could only find it."

But though Clara spoke cheerfully, she had a heavy heart; for during the month which had followed the discovery that they were nearly penniless, she had been through a great deal for a tenderly nurtured girl of three-and-twenty. Leaving a luxurious home for two plainly furnished rooms, and trying to sustain her mother with hopeful plans, had kept her busy for a time; but now she had nothing to do but wait for replies to her modest advertisements as governess, copyist, or reader.

"I do wish I'd been taught a trade, mamma, or

some useful art by which I could earn our bread now. Rich people ought to remember that money takes to itself wings, and so prepare their children to face poverty bravely. If half the sums spent on my music and dress had been used in giving me a single handicraft, what a blessing it would be to us now!" she said, thoughtfully, as she sewed with rapid fingers, unconsciously displaying the delicate skill of one to whom dress was an art and a pleasure.

"If you were not so proud we might accept Cousin John's offer and be quite comfortable," returned her mother, in a reproachful tone.

"No; we should soon feel that we were a burden, and that would be worse than living on bread and water. Let us try to help ourselves first, and then, if we fail, we cannot be accused of indolence. I know papa would wish it, so please let me try."

"As you like; *I* shall not be a burden to any one long." And Mrs. Barlow looked about for her handkerchief.

But Clara prevented the impending shower by skilfully turning the poor lady's thoughts to the new cap which was ready to try on.

"Isn't it pretty? Just the soft effect that is so becoming to your dear, pale face. Take a good look at it, and tell me whether you 'll have pale pink bows or lavender."

"It is very nice, child; you always suit me, you 've such charming taste. I 'll have lavender, for though it 's not so becoming as pink, it is more appropriate to our fallen fortunes," answered her mother, smiling in spite of herself, as she studied effects in the mirror.

"No, let us have it pink, for I want my pretty mother to look her best, though no one sees her but me, and I 'm so glad to know that I *can* make caps well if I can't do anything else," said Clara, rummaging in a box for the desired shade.

"No one ever suited me so well, and if you were not a lady, you might make a fortune as a milliner, for you have the taste of a Frenchwoman," said Mrs. Barlow, adding, as she took her cap off, "Don't you remember how offended Madame Pigat was when she found out that you altered all her caps before I wore them, and how she took some of your hints and got all the credit of them?"

"Yes, mamma," was all Clara answered, and then sat working so silently that it was evident her thoughts were as busy as her hands. Presently she said, "I must go down to our big box for the ribbon, there is none here that I like," and, taking a bunch of keys, she went slowly away.

In the large parlor below stood several trunks and cases belonging to Mrs. Barlow, and left there for her convenience, as the room was unlet.

Clara opened several of these, and rapidly turned over their contents, as if looking for something beside pale pink ribbon. Whatever it was she appeared to find it, for, dropping the last lid with a decided bang, she stood a moment looking about the large drawing-room with such brightening eyes it was evident that they saw some invisible beauty there; then a smile broke over her face, and she ran up stairs to waken her mother from a brief doze, by crying joyfully, as she waved a curl of gay ribbon over her head, —

"I 've got it, mamma, I 've got it!"

"Bless the child! what have you got, — a letter?" cried Mrs. Barlow, starting up.

"No; but something better still, — a new way to get a living. I'll be a milliner, and you shall have as many caps as you like. Now don't laugh, but listen; for it is a splendid idea, and you shall have all the credit of it, because you suggested it."

"I've materials enough," she continued, "to begin with; for when all else went, they left us our finery, you know, and now we can live on it instead of wearing it. Yes, I'll make caps and sell them, and that will be both easier and pleasanter than to go out teaching and leave you here alone."

"But how *can* you sell them?" asked her mother, half bewildered by the eagerness with which the new plan was unfolded.

"That's the best of all, and I only thought of it when I was among the boxes. Why not take the room below and lay out all our fine things temptingly, instead of selling them one by one as if we were ashamed of it?

"As I stood there just now, I saw it all. Mrs. Smith would be glad to let the room, and I could take it for a month, just to try how my plan works; and if it *does* go well, why can I not make a living as well as Madame?"

"But, child, what will people say?"

"That I'm an honest girl, and lend me a hand, if they are friends worth having."

Mrs. Barlow was not convinced, and declared she would hide herself if any one came; but after much discussion consented to let the trial be made, though predicting utter failure, as she retired to her sofa to bewail the sad necessity for such a step.

Clara worked busily for several days to carry into execution her plan; then she sent some notes to a dozen friends, modestly informing them that her "opening" would take place on a certain day.

"Curiosity will bring them, if nothing else," she said, trying to seem quite cool and gay, though her heart fluttered with anxiety as she arranged her little stock in the front parlor.

In the bay-window was her flower-stand, where the white azaleas, red geraniums, and gay nasturtiums seemed to have bloomed their loveliest to help the gentle mistress who had tended them so faithfully, even when misfortune's frost had nipped her own bright roses. Overhead swung a pair of canaries in their garlanded cage, singing with all

their might, as if, like the London 'prentice-boys in old times, they cried, "What do you lack? Come buy, come buy!"

On a long table in the middle of the room, a dozen delicate caps and head-dresses were set forth. On another lay garlands of French flowers bought for pretty Clara's own adornment. Several dainty ball-dresses, imported for the gay winter she had expected to pass, hung over chairs and couch, also a velvet mantle Mrs. Barlow wished to sell, while some old lace, well-chosen ribbons, and various elegant trifles gave color and grace to the room.

Clara's first customer was Mrs. Tower, — a stout florid lady, full of the good-will and the real kindliness which is so sweet in times of trouble.

"My dear girl, how are you, and how is mamma? Now this is charming. Such a capital idea, and just what is needed; a quiet place, where one can come and be made pretty without all the world's knowing how we do it." And greeting Clara even more cordially than of old, the good lady trotted about, admiring everything, just as she used to do when she visited the girl in her former home to

see and exclaim over any fresh arrival of Paris finery.

"I'll take this mantle off your hands with pleasure, for I intended to import one, and this saves me so much trouble. Put it up for me, dear, at the price mamma paid for it, not a cent less, because it has never been worn, and I've no duties to pay on it, so it is a good bargain for me."

Then, before Clara could thank her, she turned to the head-gear, and fell into raptures over a delicate affair, all blonde and forget-me-nots.

"Such a sweet thing! I *must* have it before any one else snaps it up. Try it on, love, and give it a touch if it doesn't fit."

Clara knew it would be vain to remonstrate, for Mrs. Tower had not a particle of taste, and insisted on wearing blue, with the complexion of a lobster. On it went, and even the wearer could not fail to see that something was amiss.

"It's not the fault of the cap, dear. I always was a fright, and my dreadful color spoils whatever I put on, so I have things handsome, and give up any attempt at beauty," she said, shaking her head at herself in the glass.

"You need not do that, and I 'll show you what I mean, if you will give me leave; for, with your fine figure and eyes, you can't help being an elegant woman. See, now, how I'll make even this cap becoming." And Clara laid the delicate flowers among the blonde behind, where the effect was unmarred by the over-red cheeks, and nothing but a soft ruche lay over the dark hair in front.

"There, isn't that better?" she asked, with her own blooming face so full of interest it was a pleasure to see her.

"Infinitely better; really becoming, and just what I want with my new silver-gray satin. Dear me, what a thing taste is!" And Mrs. Tower regarded herself with feminine satisfaction in her really fine eyes.

Here a new arrival interrupted them, and Clara went to meet several girls belonging to what had lately been her own set. The young ladies did not quite know how to behave; for, though it seemed perfectly natural to be talking over matters of dress with Clara, there was an air of proud humility about her that made them feel ill at ease, till

Nellie, a lively, warm-hearted creature, broke the ice by saying, with a little quiver in her gay voice,—

"It's no use, girls; we've either got to laugh or cry, and I think, on the whole, it would be best for all parties to laugh, and then go on just as we used to do;" which she did so infectiously that the rest joined, and then began to chatter as freely as of old.

"I speak for the opal silk, Clara, for papa has promised me a Worth dress, and I was green with envy when this came," cried Nellie, secretly wishing she wore caps, that she might buy up the whole dozen.

"You would be green with disgust if I let you have it, for no brunette could wear that most trying of colors, and I was rash to order it. You are very good, dear Nell, but I won't let you sacrifice yourself to friendship in that heroic style," answered Clara, with a grateful kiss.

"But the others are blue and lilac, both more trying than anything with a shade of pink in it. If you won't let me have this, you must invent

me the most becoming thing ever seen; for the most effective dress I had last winter was the gold-colored one with the wreath of laburnums, which you chose for me," persisted Nellie, bound to help in some way.

"I bespeak something sweet for New Year's Day. You know my style," said another young lady, privately resolving to buy the opal dress, when the rest had gone.

"Consider yourself engaged to get up my bridesmaids' costumes, for I never shall forget what a lovely effect those pale green dresses produced at Alice's wedding. She looked like a lily among its leaves, some one said, and you suggested them, I remember," added a third damsel, with the dignity of a bride-elect.

So it went on, each doing what she could to help, not with condolence, but approbation, and the substantial aid that is so easy to accept when gilded by kind words and cheery sympathy.

A hard winter, but a successful one; and when spring came, and all her patrons were fitted out for mountains, seaside, or springs, Clara folded her weary

hands content. But Mrs. Barlow saw with anxiety how pale the girl's cheeks had grown, how wistfully she eyed the green grass in the park, and how soon the smile died on the lips that tried to say cheerfully, —

"No, mamma, dear, I dare not spend in a summer trip the little sum I have laid by for the hard times that may come. I shall do very well, but I can't help remembering the happy voyage we meant to make this year, and how much good it would do *you*."

Watching the unselfish life of her daughter had taught Mrs. Barlow to forget her own regrets, inspired her with a desire to do her part, and made her ashamed of her past indolence.

Happening to mention her maternal anxieties to Mrs. Tower, that good lady suggested a plan by which the seemingly impossible became a fact, and Mrs. Barlow had the pleasure of surprising Clara with a "bright idea," as the girl had once surprised her.

"Come, dear, bestir yourself, for we must sail in ten days to pass our summer in or near Paris. I've

got commissions enough to pay our way, and we can unite business and pleasure in the most charming manner."

Clara could only clasp her hands and listen, as her mother unfolded her plan, telling how she was to get Maud's trousseau, all Mrs. Tower's winter costumes, and a long list of smaller commissions from friends and patrons who had learned to trust and value the taste and judgment of the young *modiste*.

So Clara had her summer trip, and came home bright and blooming in the early autumn, ready to take up her pretty trade again, quite unconscious that, while trying to make others beautiful, she was making her own life a very lovely one.

VIII.

HOW THEY CAMPED OUT.

"IT looks so much like snow I think it would be wiser to put off your sleighing party, Gwen," said Mrs. Arnold, looking anxiously out at the heavy sky and streets still drifted by the last winter storm.

"Not before night, mamma; we don't mind its being cloudy, we like it, because the sun makes the snow so dazzling when we get out of town. We can't give it up now, for here comes Patrick with the boys." And Gwen ran down to welcome the big sleigh, which just then drove up with four jolly lads skirmishing about inside.

"Come on!" called Mark, her brother, knocking his friends right and left, to make room for the four girls who were to complete the party.

"What do you think of the weather, Patrick?" asked Mrs. Arnold from the window, still undecided

about the wisdom of letting her flock go off alone, papa having been called away after the plan was made.

"Faith, ma'm, it 's an illigant day barring the wind, that 's a thrifle could to the nose. I 'll have me eye on the childer, ma'm, and there 'll be no throuble at all, at all," replied the old coachman, lifting a round red face out of his muffler, and patting little Gus on the shoulder, as he sat proudly on the high seat holding the whip.

"Be careful, dears, and come home early."

With which parting caution mamma shut the window, and watched the young folks drive gayly away, little dreaming what would happen before they got back.

The wind was more than a "thrifle could," for when they got out of the city it blew across the open country in bitter blasts, and made the eight little noses almost as red as old Pat's, who had been up all night at a wake, and was still heavy-headed with too much whiskey, though no one suspected it.

The lads enjoyed themselves immensely snowballing one another; for the drifts were still fresh

enough to furnish soft snow, and Mark, Bob, and Tony had many a friendly tussle in it as they went up hills, or paused to breathe the horses after a swift trot along a level bit of road. Little Gus helped drive till his hands were benumbed in spite of the new red mittens, and he had to descend among the girls, who were cuddled cosily under the warm robes, telling secrets, eating candy, and laughing at the older boys' pranks.

Sixteen-year-old Gwendoline was matron of the party, and kept excellent order among the girls; for Ruth and Alice were nearly her own age, and Rita a most obedient younger sister.

"I say, Gwen, we are going to stop at the old house on the way home and get some nuts for this evening. Papa said we might, and some of the big Baldwins too. I've got baskets, and while we fellows fill them you girls can look round the house," said Mark, when the exhausted young gentlemen returned to their seats.

"That will be nice. I want to get some books, and Rita has been very anxious about one of her dolls, which she is sure was left in the nursery

closet. If we are going to stop we ought to be turning back, Pat, for it is beginning to snow and will be dark early," answered Gwen, suddenly realizing that great flakes were fast whitening the roads and the wind had risen to a gale.

"Shure and I will, miss dear, as soon as iver I can; but it's round a good bit we must go, for I couldn't be turning here widout upsettin' the whole of yez, it's that drifted. Rest aisy, and I'll fetch up at the ould place in half an hour, plaze the powers," said Pat, who had lost his way and wouldn't own it, being stupid with a sup or two he had privately taken on the way, to keep the chill out of his bones he said.

On they went again, with the wind at their backs, caring little for the snow that now fell fast, or the gathering twilight, since they were going toward home they thought. It was a very long half-hour before Pat brought them to the country-house, which was shut up for the winter. With difficulty they ploughed their way up to the steps, and scrambled on to the piazza, where they danced about to warm their feet till Mark unlocked the door and let them in, leaving Pat to enjoy a doze on his seat.

"Make haste, boys; it is cold and dark here, and we must get home. Mamma will be so anxious, and it really is going to be a bad storm," said Gwen, whose spirits were damped by the gloom of the old house, and who felt her responsibility, having promised to be home early.

Off went the boys to attic and cellar, being obliged to light the lantern left here for the use of whoever came now and then to inspect the premises. The girls, having found books and doll, sat upon the rolled-up carpets, or peeped about at the once gay and hospitable rooms, now looking very empty and desolate with piled-up furniture, shuttered windows, and fireless hearths.

"If we were going to stay long I'd have a fire in the library. Papa often does when he comes out, to keep the books from moulding," began Gwen, but was interrupted by a shout from without, and, running to the door, saw Pat picking himself out of a drift while the horses were galloping down the avenue at full speed.

"Be jabbers, them villains give a jump when that fallin' branch struck 'em, and out I wint, bein' tuk

unknownst, just thinkin' of me poor cousin Mike May his bed above be aisy the day! Whist now, miss dear! I 'll fetch 'em back in a jiffy. Stop still till I come, and kape them b'ys quite."

With a blow to settle his hat, Patrick trotted gallantly away into the storm, and the girls went in to tell the exciting news to the lads, who came whooping back from their search, with baskets of nuts and apples.

"Here 's a go!" cried Mark. "Old Pat will run half-way to town before he catches the horses, and we are in for an hour or two at least."

"Then do make a fire, for we shall die of cold if we have to wait long," begged Gwen, rubbing Rita's cold hands, and looking anxiously at little Gus, who was about making up his mind to roar.

"So we will, and be jolly till the blunderbuss gets back. Camp down, girls, and you fellows, come and hold the lantern while I get wood and stuff. It is so confoundedly dark, I shall break my neck down the shed steps." And Mark led the way to the library, where the carpet still remained, and comfortable chairs and sofas invited the chilly visitors to rest.

"How can you light your fire when you get the wood?" asked Ruth, a practical damsel, who looked well after her own creature comforts and was longing for a warm supper.

"Papa hides the matches in a tin box, so the rats won't get at them. Here they are, and two or three bits of candle for the sticks on the chimney-piece, if he forgets to have the lantern trimmed. Now we will light up, and look cosey when the boys come back."

And producing the box from under a sofa-cushion, Gwen cheered the hearts of all by lighting two candles, rolling up the chairs, and making ready to be comfortable. Thoughtful Alice went to see if Pat was returning, and found a buffalo-robe lying on the steps. Returning with this, she reported that there was no sign of the runaways, and advised making ready for a long stay.

"How mamma will worry!" thought Gwen, but made light of the affair, because she saw Rita looked timid, and Gus shivered till his teeth chattered.

"We will have a nice time, and play we are shipwrecked people or Arctic explorers. Here comes Dr. Kane and the sailors with supplies of wood, so

we can thaw our pemmican and warm our feet. Gus shall be the little Esquimaux boy, all dressed in fur, as he is in the picture we have at home," she said, wrapping the child in the robe, and putting her own sealskin cap on his head to divert his mind.

"Here we are! Now for a jolly blaze, boys; and if Pat doesn't come back we can have our fun here instead of at home," cried Mark, well pleased with the adventure, as were his mates.

So they fell to work, and soon a bright fire was lighting up the room with its cheerful shine, and the children gathered about it, quite careless of the storm raging without, and sure that Pat would come in time.

"I'm hungry," complained Gus as soon as he was warm.

"So am I," added Rita from the rug, where the two little ones sat toasting themselves.

"Eat an apple," said Mark.

"They are so hard and cold I don't like them," began Gus.

"Roast some!" cried Ruth.

"And crack nuts," suggested Alice.

"Pity we can't cook something in real camp style; it would be such fun," said Tony, who had spent weeks on Monadnock, living upon the supplies he and his party tugged up the mountain on their backs.

"We shall not have time for anything but what we have. Put down your apples and crack away, or we shall be obliged to leave them," advised Gwen, coming back from an observation at the front door with an anxious line on her forehead; for the storm was rapidly increasing, and there was no sign of Pat or the horses.

The rest were in high glee, and an hour or two slipped quickly away as they enjoyed the impromptu feast and played games. Gus recalled them to the discomforts of their situation by saying with a yawn and a whimper,—

"I'm so sleepy! I want my own bed and mamma."

"So do I!" echoed Rita, who had been nodding for some time, and longed to lie down and sleep comfortably anywhere.

"Almost eight o'clock! By Jove, that old Pat is taking his time, I think. Wonder if he has got

into trouble? We can't do anything, and may as well keep quiet here," said Mark, looking at his watch and beginning to understand that the joke was rather a serious one.

"Better make a night of it and all go to sleep. Pat can wake us up when he comes. The cold makes a fellow *so* drowsy." And Bob gave a stretch that nearly rent him asunder.

"I will let the children nap on the sofa. They are so tired of waiting, and may as well amuse themselves in that way as in fretting. Come, Gus and Rita, each take a pillow, and I'll cover you up with my shawl."

Gwen made the little ones comfortable, and they were off in five minutes. The others kept up bravely till nine o'clock, then the bits of candles were burnt out, the stories all told, nuts and apples had lost their charm, and weariness and hunger caused spirits to fail perceptibly.

"I've eaten five Baldwins, and yet I want more. Something filling and good. Can't we catch a rat and roast him?" proposed Bob, who was a hearty lad and was ravenous by this time.

"Isn't there anything in the house?" asked Ruth, who dared not eat nuts for fear of indigestion.

"Not a thing that I know of except a few pickles in the storeroom; we had so many, mamma left some here," answered Gwen, resolving to provision the house before she left it another autumn.

"Pickles alone are rather sour feed. If we only had a biscuit now, they wouldn't be bad for a relish," said Tony, with the air of a man who had known what it was to live on burnt bean-soup and rye flapjacks for a week.

"I saw a keg of soft-soap in the shed. How would that go with the pickles?" suggested Bob, who felt equal to the biggest and acidest cucumber ever grown.

"Mamma knew an old lady who actually did eat soft-soap and cream for her complexion," put in Alice, whose own fresh face looked as if she had tried the same distasteful remedy with success.

The boys laughed, and Mark, who felt that hospitality required him to do something for his guests, said briskly, —

"Let us go on a foraging expedition while the

lamp holds out to burn, for the old lantern is al most gone and then we are done for. Come on, Bob; your sharp nose will smell out food if there is any."

"Don't set the house afire, and bring more wood when you come, for we must have light of some kind in this poky place," called Gwen, with a sigh, wishing every one of them were safely at home and abed.

A great tramping of boots, slamming of doors, and shouting of voices followed the departure of the boys, as well as a crash, a howl, and then a roar of laughter, as Bob fell down the cellar stairs, having opened the door in search of food and poked his nose in too far. Presently they came back, very dusty, cobwebby, and cold, but triumphantly bearing a droll collection of trophies. Mark had a piece of board and the lantern, Tony a big wooden box and a tin pail, Bob fondly embraced a pickle jar and a tumbler of jelly which had been forgotten on a high shelf in the storeroom.

"Meal, pickles, jam, and boards. What a mess and what are we to do with it all?" cried the girls, much amused at the result of the expedition.

"Can any of you make a hoe cake?" demanded Mark.

"No, indeed! I can make caramels and cocoanut cakes," said Ruth, proudly.

"I can make good toast and tea," added Alice.

"I can't cook anything," confessed Gwen, who was unusually accomplished in French, German, and music.

"Girls aren't worth much in the hour of need. Take hold, Tony, you are the chap for me." And Mark disrespectfully turned his back on the young ladies, who could only sit and watch the lads work.

"He can't do it without water," whispered Ruth.

"Or salt," answered Alice.

"Or a pan to bake it in," added Gwen; and then all smiled at the dilemma they foresaw.

But Tony was equal to the occasion, and calmly went on with his task, while Mark arranged the fire and Bob opened the pickles. First the new cook filled the pail with snow till enough was melted to wet the meal; this mixture was stirred with a pine stick till thick enough, then spread on the board and set up before the bed of coals to brown.

"It never will bake in the world." "He can't turn it, so it won't be done on both sides." "Won't be fit to eat any way!" And with these dark hints the girls consoled themselves for their want of skill.

But the cake did bake a nice brown, Tony did turn it neatly with his jack-knife and the stick, and when it was done cut it into bits, added jelly, and passed it round on an old atlas; and every one said, —

"It really does taste good!"

Two more were baked, and eaten with pickles for a change, then all were satisfied, and after a vote of thanks to Tony they began to think of sleep.

"Pat has gone home and told them we are all right, and mamma knows we can manage here well enough for one night, so don't worry, Gwen, but take a nap, and I'll lie on the rug and see to the fire."

Mark's happy-go-lucky way of taking things did not convince his sister; but as she could do nothing, she submitted and made her friends as comfortable as she could.

All had plenty of wraps, so the girls nestled into the three large chairs, Bob and Tony rolled themselves up in the robe, with their feet to the fire, and were soon snoring like weary hunters. Mark pillowed his head on a log, and was sound asleep in ten minutes in spite of his promise to be sentinel.

Gwen's chair was the least easy of the three, and she could not forget herself like the rest, but sat wide awake, watching the blaze, counting the hours, and wondering why no one came to them.

The wind blew fiercely, the snow beat against the blinds, rats scuttled about the walls, and now and then a branch fell upon the roof with a crash. Weary, yet excited, the poor girl imagined all sorts of mishaps to Pat and the horses, recalled various ghost stories she had heard, and wondered if it was on such a night as this that a neighbor's house had been robbed. So nervous did she get at last that she covered up her face and resolutely began to count a thousand, feeling that anything was better than having to wake Mark and own she was frightened.

Before she knew it she fell into a drowse and

dreamed that they were all cast away on an iceberg and a polar bear was coming up to devour Gus, who innocently called to the big white dog and waited to caress him.

"A bear! a bear! oh, boys, save him!" murmured Gwen in her sleep, and the sound of her own distressed voice waked her.

The fire was nearly out, for she had slept longer than she knew, the room was full of shadows, and the storm seemed to have died away. In the silence which now reigned, unbroken even by a snore, Gwen heard a sound that made her start and tremble. Some one was coming softly up the back stairs. All the outer doors were locked, she was sure; all the boys lay in their places, for she could see and count the three long figures and little Gus in a bunch on the sofa. The girls had not stirred, and this was no rat's scamper, but a slow and careful tread, stealing nearer and nearer to the study door, left ajar when the last load of wood was brought in.

"Pat would knock or ring, and papa would speak, so that we might not be scared. I want to scream,

but I won't till I see that it really is some one," thought Gwen, while her heart beat fast and her eyes were fixed on the door, straining to see through the gloom.

The steps drew nearer, paused on the threshold, and then a head appeared as the door noiselessly swung wider open. A man's head in a fur cap, but it was neither papa nor Pat nor Uncle Ed. Poor Gwen would have called out then, but her voice was gone, and she could only lie back, looking, mute and motionless. A tiny spire of flame sprung up and flickered for a moment on the tall dark figure in the doorway, a big man with a beard, and in his hand something that glittered. Was it a pistol or a dagger or a dark lantern? thought the girl, as the glimmer died away, and the shadows returned to terrify her.

The man seemed to look about him keenly for a moment, then vanished, and the steps went down the hall to the front door, which was opened from within and some one admitted quietly. Whispers were heard, and then feet approached again, accompanied by a gleam of light.

"Now I must scream!" thought Gwen; and scream she did with all her might, as two men entered, one carrying a lantern, the other a bright tin can.

"Boys! Robbers! Fire! Tramps! Oh, do wake up!" cried Gwen, frantically pulling Mark by the hair, and Bob and Tony by the legs, as the quickest way of rousing them.

Then there was a scene! The boys sprung up and rubbed their eyes, the girls hid theirs and began to shriek, while the burglars laughed aloud, and poor Gwen, quite worn out, fainted away on the rug. It was all over in a minute, however; for Mark had his wits about him, and his first glance at the man with the lantern allayed his fears.

"Hullo, Uncle Ed! We are all right. Got tired of waiting for you, so we went to sleep."

"Stop screaming, girls, and quiet those children! Poor little Gwen is badly frightened. Get some snow, Tom, while I pick her up," commanded the uncle, and order was soon established.

The boys were all right at once, and Ruth and Alice devoted themselves to the children, who were

very cross and sleepy in spite of their fright. Gwen was herself in a moment, and so ashamed of her scare that she was glad there was no more light to betray her pale cheeks.

"I should have known you, uncle, at once, but to see a strange man startled me, and he didn't speak, and I thought that can was a pistol," stammered Gwen, when she had collected her wits a little.

"Why, that's my old friend and captain, Tom May. Don't you remember him, child? He thought you were all asleep, so crept out to tell me and let me in."

"How did he get in himself?" asked Gwen, glad to turn the conversation.

"Found the shed door open, and surprised the camp by a flank movement. You wouldn't do for picket duty, boys," laughed Captain Tom, enjoying the dismay of the lads.

"Oh, thunder! I forgot to bolt it when we first went for the wood. Had to open it, the place was so plaguy dark," muttered Bob, much disgusted.

"Where 's Pat?" asked Tony, with great presence

of mind, feeling anxious to shift all blame to his broad shoulders.

Uncle Ed shook the snow from his hair and clothes, and, poking up the fire, leisurely sat down and took Gus on his knee before he replied, — "Serve out the grog, Tom, while I spin my yarn."

Round went the can of hot coffee, and a few sips brightened up the young folks immensely, so that they listened with great interest to the tale of Pat's mishaps.

"The scamp was half-seas over when he started, and deserves all he got. In the first place he lost his way, then tumbled overboard, and let the horses go. He floundered after them a mile or two, then lost his bearings in the storm, pitched into a ditch, broke his head, and lay there till found. The fellows carried him to a house off the road, and there he is in a nice state; for, being his countrymen, they dosed him with whiskey till he was 'quite and aisy,' and went to sleep, forgetting all about you, the horses, and his distracted mistress at home. The animals were stopped at the cross-roads, and there we found them after a lively cruise round

the country. Then we hunted up Pat; but what with the blow and too many drops of 'the craythur, his head was in a muddle, and we could get nothing out of him. So we went home again, and then your mother remembered that you had mentioned stopping here, and we fitted out a new craft and set sail, prepared for a long voyage. Your father was away, so Tom volunteered, and here we are."

"A jolly lark! now let us go home and go to bed," proposed Mark, with a gape.

"Isn't it most morning?" asked Tony, who had been sleeping like a dormouse.

"Just eleven. Now pack up and let us be off. The storm is over, the moon coming out, and we shall find a good supper waiting for the loved and lost. Bear a hand, Tom, and ship this little duffer, for he 's off again."

Uncle Ed put Gus into the captain's arms, and, taking Rita himself, led the way to the sleigh which stood at the door. In they all bundled, and after making the house safe, off they went, feeling that they had had a pretty good time on the whole.

"I will learn cooking and courage, before I try camping out again," resolved Gwen, as she went jingling homeward; and she kept her word.

IX.

MY LITTLE SCHOOL-GIRL.

THE first time that I saw her was one autumn morning as I rode to town in a horse-car. It was early, and my only fellow-passenger was a crusty old gentleman, who sat in a corner, reading his paper; so when the car stopped, I glanced out to see who came next, hoping it would be a pleasanter person. No one appeared for a minute, and the car stood still, while both driver and conductor looked in the same direction without a sign of impatience. I looked also, but all I could see was a little girl running across the park, as girls of twelve or thirteen seldom run nowadays, if any one can see them.

"Are you waiting for her?" I asked of the pleasant-faced conductor, who stood with his hand on the bell, and a good-natured smile in his eyes.

"Yes, ma'am, we always stop for little missy," he answered; and just then up she came, all rosy and breathless with her run.

"Thank you very much. I'm late to-day, and was afraid I should miss my car," she said, as he helped her in with a fatherly air that was pleasant to see.

Taking a corner seat, she smoothed the curly locks, disturbed by the wind, put on her gloves, and settled her books in her lap, then modestly glanced from the old gentleman in the opposite corner to the lady near by. Such a bright little face as I saw under the brown hat-rim, happy blue eyes, dimples in the ruddy cheeks, and the innocent expression which makes a young girl so sweet an object to old eyes.

The crusty gentleman evidently agreed with me, for he peeped over the top of the paper at his pleasant little neighbor as she sat studying a lesson, and cheering herself with occasional sniffs at a posy of mignonette in her button-hole.

When the old gentleman caught my eye, he dived out of sight with a loud "Hem!" but he was peeping again directly, for there was something irresisti-

bly attractive about the unconscious lassie opposite and one could no more help looking at her than at a lovely flower or a playful kitten.

Presently she shut her book with a decided pat, and an air of relief that amused me. She saw the half-smile I could not repress, seemed to understand my sympathy, and said with a laugh, —

"It *was* a hard lesson, but I've got it!"

So we began to talk about school and lessons, and I soon discovered that the girl was a clever scholar, whose only drawback was, as she confided to me, a "love of fun."

We were just getting quite friendly, when several young men got in, one of whom stared at the pretty child till even she observed it, and showed that she did by the color that came and went in her cheeks. It annoyed me as much as if she had been my own little daughter, for I like modesty, and have often been troubled by the forward manners of school-girls, who seem to enjoy being looked at. So I helped this one out of her little trouble by making room between the old gentleman and myself, and motioning her to come and sit there.

She understood at once, thanked me with a look, and nestled into the safe place so gratefully, that the old gentleman glared over his spectacles at the rude person who had disturbed the serenity of the child.

Then we rumbled along again, the car getting fuller and fuller as we got down town. Presently an Irishwoman, with a baby, got in, and before I could offer my seat, my little school-girl was out of hers, with a polite —

"Please take it, ma'am; I can stand perfectly well."

It was prettily done, and I valued the small courtesy all the more, because it evidently cost the bashful creature an effort to stand up alone in a car full of strangers; especially as she could not reach the strap to steady herself, and found it difficult to stand comfortably.

Then it was that the crusty man showed how he appreciated my girl's good manners, for he hooked his cane in the strap, and gave it to her, saying, with a smile that lighted up his rough face like sun shine, —

"Hold on to that, my dear."

"Ah," thought I, "how little we can judge from appearances! This grim old soul is a gentleman, after all."

Turning her face towards us, the girl held on to the stout cane, and swayed easily to and fro as we bumped over the rails. The Irishwoman's baby, a sickly little thing, was attracted by the flowers, and put out a small hand to touch them, with a wistful look at the bright face above.

"Will baby have some?" said my girl, and made the little creature happy with some gay red leaves.

"Bless your heart, honey, it's fond he is of the like o' them, and seldom he gets any," said the mother, gratefully, as she settled baby's dirty hood, and wrapped the old shawl round his feet.

Baby stared hard at the giver of posies, but his honest blue eyes gave no offence, and soon the two were so friendly that baby boldly clutched at the bright buttons on her sack, and crowed with delight when he got one, while we all smiled at the

pretty play, and were sorry when the little lady with a bow and a smile to us, got out at the church corner.

"Now, I shall probably never see that child again, yet what a pleasant picture she leaves in my memory!" I thought to myself, as I caught a last glimpse of the brown hat, going round the corner.

But I did see her again many times that winter for not long after, as I passed down a certain street near my winter quarters, I came upon a flock of girls, eating their luncheon as they walked to and fro on the sunny side, — pretty, merry creatures, all laughing and chattering at once, as they tossed apples from hand to hand, munched candy, or compared cookies. I went slowly, to enjoy the sight, as I do when I meet a party of sparrows on the Common, and was wondering what would become of so many budding women, when, all of a sudden, I saw *my* little school-girl.

Yes, I knew her in a minute, for she wore the same brown hat, and the rosy face was sparkling with fun, as she told secrets with a chosen friend,

while eating a wholesome slice of bread-and-butter as only a hungry school-girl could.

She did not recognize me, but I took a good look at her as I went by, longing to know what the particular secret was that ended in such a gale of laughter.

After that, I often saw my girl as I took my walks abroad, and one day could not resist speaking to her when I met her alone; for usually her mates clustered round her like bees about their queen, which pleased me, since it showed how much they loved the sunshiny child.

I had a paper of grapes in my hand, and when I saw her coming, whisked out a handsome bunch, all ready to offer, for I had made up my mind to speak this time. She was reading a paper, but looked up to give me the inside of the walk.

Before her eyes could fall again, I held out the grapes and said, just as I had heard her say more than once to a schoolmate at lunch-time, "Let 's go halves."

She understood at once, laughed, and took the bunch, saying with twinkling eyes,—

"Oh, thank you! they are beauties!"

Then, as we went on to the corner together, I told her why I did it, and recalled the car-ride.

"I'd forgotten all about that, but my conductor is very kind, and always waits for me," she said, evidently surprised that a stranger should take an interest in her small self.

I did not have half time enough with her, for a bell rang, and away she skipped, looking back to nod and smile at the queer lady who had taken a fancy to her.

A few days afterward a fine nosegay of flowers was left at the door for me, and when I asked the servant who sent them he answered, —

"A little girl asked if a lame lady didn't live here, and when I said yes, she told me to give you these, and say the grapes were very nice."

I knew at once who it was, and enjoyed the funny message immensely; for when one leads a quiet life, little things interest and amuse.

Christmas was close by, and I planned a return for the flowers, of a sort that I fancied my young friend would appreciate.

I knew that Christmas week would be a holiday, so, the day before it began, I went to the school just before recess, and left a frosted plum cake, directed to "Miss Goldilocks, from she knows who."

At first I did not know how to address my nice white parcel, for I never had heard the child's name. But after thinking over the matter, I remembered that she was the only girl there with yellow curls hanging down her back, so I decided to risk the cake with the above direction.

The maid who took it in (for my girl went to a private school) smiled, and said at once she knew who I meant. I left my cake, and strolled round the corner to the house of a friend, there to wait and watch for the success of my joke, for the girls always went that way at recess.

Presently the little hats began to go bobbing by, the silent street to echo with laughter, and the sidewalk to bloom with gay gowns, for the girls were all out in winter colors now.

From behind a curtain I peeped at them, and saw, with great satisfaction, that nearly all had bits

of my cake in their hands, and were talking it over with the most flattering interest. My particular little girl, with a friend on each arm, passed so near me that I could see the happy look in her eyes, and hear her say, with a toss of the bright hair, —

"Mother will plan it for me, and I can get it done by New Year. Won't it be fun to hang it on the door some day, and then run?"

I fancied that she meant to make something for me, and waited with patience, wondering how this odd frolic with my little school-girl would end.

New Year's Day came and passed, but no gift hung on my door; so I made up my mind it was all a mistake, and, being pretty busy about that time, thought no more of the matter till some weeks later, as I came into town one day after a visit in the country.

I am fond of observing faces, and seldom forget one if anything has particularly attracted my attention to it. So this morning, as I rode along, I looked at the conductor, as there was no one else to observe, and he had a pleasant sort of face. Somehow, it looked familiar, and after thinking

idly about it for a minute, I remembered where I had seen it before.

He was the man who waited for "little missy," and I at once began to hope that she would come again, for I wanted to ask about the holidays, remembering how "fond of fun" she was.

When we came to the South End Square, where I met her first, I looked out, expecting to see the little figure running down the wide path again, and quite willing to wait for it a long time if necessary. But no one was to be seen but two boys and a dog. The car did not stop, and though the conductor looked out that way, his hand was not on the strap, and no smile on his face.

"Don't you wait for the little girl now?" I asked, feeling disappointed at not seeing my pretty friend again.

"I wish I could, ma'am," answered the man, understanding at once, though of course he did not remember me.

"New rules, perhaps?" I added, as he did not explain, but stood fingering his punch, and never minding an old lady, wildly waving her bag at him from the sidewalk.

"No, ma'am; but it's no use waiting for little missy any more, because" — here he leaned in and said, very low, — "she is dead;" then turned sharply round, rung the bell, put the old lady in and shut the door.

How grieved I was to have that pleasant friendship end so sadly, for I had planned many small surprises for my girl, and now I could do no more, could never know all about her, never see the sunny face again, or win another word from lips that seemed made for smiling.

Only a little school-girl, yet how many friends she seemed to have, making them unconsciously by her gentle manners, generous actions, and innocent light-heartedness. I could not bear to think what home must be without her, for I am sure I was right in believing her a good, sweet child, because real character shows itself in little things, and the heart that always keeps in tune makes its music heard everywhere.

The busy man of the horse-car found time to miss her, the schoolmates evidently mourned their queen, for when I met them they walked quietly, talked

low, and several wore black bows upon the sleeve; while I, although I never knew her name, or learned a single fact about her, felt the sweetness of her happy nature, and have not yet forgotten my little school-girl.

X

WHAT A SHOVEL DID.

AS my friend stood by the window, watching the "soft falling snow," I saw him smile, — a thoughtful yet a very happy smile, and, anxious to know what brought it, I asked, —

"What do you see out there?"

"Myself," was the answer that made me stare in surprise, as I joined him and looked curiously into the street.

All I saw was a man shovelling snow; and, thoroughly puzzled, I turned to Richard, demanding an explanation. He laughed, and answered readily, —

"While we wait for Kate and the children, I 'll tell you a little adventure of mine. It may be useful to you some day.

"Fifteen years ago, on a Sunday morning like this, I stood at the window of a fireless, shabby

little room, without one cent in my pocket, and no prospect of getting one.

"I had gone supperless to bed, and spent the long night asking, 'What shall I do?' and, receiving no reply but that which is so hard for eager youth to accept, 'Wait and trust.'

"I was alone in the world, with no fortune but my own talent, and even that I was beginning to doubt, because it brought no money. For a year I had worked and hoped, with a brave spirit; had written my life into poems and tales; tried a play; turned critic and reviewed books; offered my pen and time to any one who would employ them, and now was ready for the hardest literary work, and the poorest pay, for starvation stared me in the face.

"All my ventures failed, and my paper boats freighted with so many high hopes, went down one after another, leaving me to despair. The last wreck lay on my table then, — a novel, worn with much journeying to and fro, on which I had staked my last chance, and lost it.

"As I stood there at my window, cold and hun-

gry, solitary and despairing, I said to myself, in a desperate mood,—

"'It is all a mistake; I have no talent, and there is no room in the world for me, so the quicker I get out of it the better.'

"Just then a little chap came from a gate opposite, with a shovel on his shoulder, and trudged away, whistling shrilly, to look for a job. I watched him out of sight, thinking bitterly,—

"'Now look at the injustice of it! Here am I, a young man full of brains, starving because no one will give me a chance; and there is that ignorant little fellow making a living with an old shovel!'

A voice seemed to answer me, saying,—

"'Why don't you do the same? If brains don't pay, try muscles, and thank God that you have health.'

"Of course it was only my own pluck and common sense; but I declare to you I was as much struck by the new idea as if a strange voice *had* actually spoken; and I answered, heartily,—

"'As I live I *will* try it! and not give up while there is any honest work for these hands to do.'

"With sudden energy I put on my shabbiest clothes,—and they were *very* shabby, of course, added an old cap and rough comforter, as disguise, and stole down to the shed where I had seen a shovel. It was early, and the house was very quiet, for the other lodgers were hard workers all the week, and took their rest Sunday morning.

"Unseen by the sleepy girl making her fires, I got the shovel and stole away by the back gate, feeling like a boy out on a frolic. It was bitter cold, and a heavy snow-storm had raged all night. The streets were full of drifts, and the city looked as if dead, for no one was stirring yet but milkmen, and other poor fellows like me, seeking for an early job.

"I made my way to the West End, and was trying to decide at which of the tall houses to apply first, when the door of one opened, and a pretty housemaid appeared, broom in hand.

"At sight of the snowy wilderness she looked dismayed, and with a few unavailing strokes of her broom at the drift on the steps, was about to go in, when her eye fell on me.

"My shovel explained my mission, and she beckoned with an imperious wave of her duster to the shabby man opposite. I ploughed across, and received in silence the order to —

"'Clear them steps and sidewalk, and sweep 'em nice, for our folks always go to church, rain or shine.'

"Then leaving her broom outside, the maid slammed the door with a shiver, and I fell to work manfully. It was a heavy job, and my hands, unused to any heavier tool than a pen, were soon blistered; but I tugged away, and presently found myself much stimulated by the critical and approving glances bestowed upon me by the pretty girl, taking breakfast in the basement with a buxom cook and a friend, who had evidently dropped in on her way home from early Mass.

"I was a young fellow, and in spite of my late despair, the fun of the thing tickled me immensely, and I laughed behind my old tippet, as I shovelled and swept with a vigor that caused the stout cook to smile upon me.

"When the job was done, and I went to the lower door for my well-earned pay, the maid said,

with condescension, as she glanced coquettishly at my ruddy face and eyes that twinkled under the old cap, I suspect, —

"'You can wait here while I run up, and get the money, if master is awake.'

"'Ye haven't the heart of a woman, Mary, to kape the poor crater out there when it's kilt wid the could he is,' said the buxom cook; adding, in a motherly tone, 'Come in wid yez, my man, and set till the fire, for it's bitter weather the day.'

"'Faix an' it is, ma'm, thankin' ye kindly,' I answered, with a fine brogue, for as a lad I had played the Irishman with success.

"The good soul warmed to me at once, and, filling a mug with coffee, gave it to me with a hearty —

"'A hot sup will do you no harrum, me b'y, and sure in the blessid Christmas time that's just foreninst us, the master won't begrudge ye a breakfast; so take a biscuit and a sassage, for it's like ye haven't had a mouthful betwixt your lips the day.'

"'That I will,' said I; 'and it's good luck and a long life to ye I'm drinkin' in this illegint coffee.'

"'Bless the b'y! but it's a grateful heart he has and a blue eye as like my Pat as two pays,' cried the cook, regarding me with increasing favor, as I bolted the breakfast which I should have been too proud to accept from any hand less humble.

"Here the guest asked a question concerning Pat, and instantly the mother gushed into praises of her boy, telling in a few picturesque words, as only an Irishwoman could do it, how Pat had come to 'Ameriky' first when things went hard with them in the 'ould country,' and how good he was in sending home his wages till she could join him.

"How she came, but could not find her 'b'y, because of the loss of the letter with his address, and how for a year she waited and watched, sure that he would find her at last. How the saints had an eye on him, and one happy day answered her prayers in a way that she considered 'aquil to any merrycle ever seen.' For, looking up from her work, who should she see, in a fine livery, sitting on the box of a fine carriage at the master's door but 'her own b'y, like a king in his glory.'

"'Arrah, ye should have seen me go up thim

steps, Katy, and my Pat come off that box like an angel flyin', and the way he tuk me in his arms, never mindin' his illigint coat, and me all dirt a-blackin' me range. Ah'r, but I was a happy crayter that day!'

"Here the good soul stopped to wipe away the tears that were shining on her fat cheeks, and Mary appeared with a dollar, 'for master said it was a tough job and well done.'

"'May his bed be aisy above, darlin', and many thanks, and the compliments of the sayson to ye, ladies.'

"With which grateful farewell I trudged away, well pleased at the success of my first attempt. Refreshed and cheered by the kindness of my humble hostess, I took heart, and worked away at my next job with redoubled energy, and by the time the first bells rang for church, I had three dollars in my pocket. My blood danced in my veins, and all my despair seemed shovelled away with the snow I had cleared from other people's paths.

"My back ached, and my palms were sore, but

heart and soul were in tune again, and hurrying home, I dressed and went to church, feeling that a special thanksgiving was due for the lesson I had learned.

"Christmas garlands hung upon the walls, Christmas music rolled through the church, and Christmas sermon, prayer, and psalm cheered the hearts of all. But the shabby young man in the back seat found such beauty and comfort in the service of that day that he never forgot it, for it was the turning-point of his life."

My friend fell silent for a minute, and I sat, contrasting that past of his, with the happy present, for he was a prosperous man now, with an honored name, a comfortable fortune, and best of all, a noble wife, and some brave lads to follow in his footsteps.

Presently I could not resist asking, —

"Did you go on shovelling, Dick?"

"Not long, for there was no need of it, thanks to Pat's mother," he answered smiling.

"Come, I *must* have all the story, for I know it has a sequel!"

"A very happy one. Yes, I owe to that kind soul and her little story, the turn that Fortune gave her wheel. Nay, rather say, the touch of nature that makes the whole world kin. For when I went home that day, I sat down and made a simple tale from the hint she gave, and something of her own humor and pathos must have got into it, for it was accepted, and more stories solicited, to my great surprise.

"I wrote it to please myself, for I was in a happy mood; and though my room was cold, the sun shone; though my closet was bare, honest money was in my pocket, and I felt as rich as a king.

"I remember I laughed at myself as I posted the manuscript on Monday morning, called it infatuation, and thought no more of it for days, being busy with my new friend, the shovel.

"Snow was gone, but coal remained, and I put in tons of it with a will, for this active labor was the tonic my overwrought nerves needed, and my spirits rose wonderfully, as muscles earned the daily bread that brains had failed to win.

"Ah! but they brought me something better

than bread, dearer than fame; and to that old shovel I owe the happiness of my life! The very day I got the letter accepting the little story, I was gaily putting in my last ton of coal, for I felt that now I might take up the pen again, since in a kitchen I had discovered the magic that wins listeners.

"Bless my heart! how I worked and how I whistled, I was so happy, and felt so lifted above all doubt and fear by the knowledge that my talent was *not* a failure, and the fact that my own strong arms could keep the wolf from the door!

"I was so busy that I had not observed a lady watching me from the window. She had opened it to feed the hungry sparrows, and my whistle caught her ear, for it was an air she knew, and had heard a certain young man sing before he dropped out of her circle, and left her wondering sadly what had befallen him.

"All this I learned afterward; then I unconsciously piped away till my job was done, wiped my hot face, and went in to get my money. To my sur-

prise I was told to 'go into the dining room, and missis would attend to it.'

"I went and found myself face to face, not with 'missis,' but the woman I had loved hopelessly but faithfully all that hard year, since I had gone away to fight my battle alone.

"For a moment I believed she did not know me, in my shabby suit and besmirched face. But she did, and with a world of feeling in her own sweet face, she offered me, not money, but her hand, saying in a voice that made my heart leap up, —

"'Richard, I was afraid you had gone down as so many disappointed young men go when their ambitious hopes fail; but I am so glad, so proud to see in your face that you still work and wait, like a brave and honest man. I *must* speak to you!'

"What could I do after that but hold the white hand fast in both my grimy ones, while I told my little story, and the hope that had come at last. Heaven knows I told it very badly, for those tender eyes were upon me all the time, so full of unspoken

love and pity, admiration and respect, that I felt like one in a glorified dream, and forgot I was a coal-heaver.

"That was the last of it, though, and the next time I came to see my Kate it was with clean hands, that carried her, as a first love-token, the little tale which was the foundation-stone of this happy home."

He stopped there, and his face brightened beautifully, for the sound of little feet approached, and childish voices cried eagerly, —

"Papa! papa! the snow has come! May we go and shovel off the steps?"

"Yes, my lads, and mind you do it well; for some day you may have to earn your breakfast," answered Dick, as three fine boys came prancing in, full of delight at the first snow-fall.

"These fellows have a passion for shovelling which they inherit from their father," he added, with a twinkle of the eye that told Mrs. Kate what we had been talking about.

It was sweet to see with what tender pride she took the hand he stretched out to her, and holding

it in both her own, said, with her eyes upon her boys, —

"I hope they *will* inherit not only their father's respect for honest work, but the genius that can see and paint truth and beauty in the humble things of this world."

XI.

CLAMS.

A GHOST STORY.

"I HAVEN'T a room in the house, ma'am, but if you don't mind going down to the cottage, and coming up here to your meals, I can accommodate you, and would be glad to," said Mrs. Grant, in answer to my demand for board.

"Where is the cottage?" and I looked about me, feeling ready to accept anything in the way of shelter, after the long, hot journey from broiling Boston, to breezy York Harbor.

"Right down there, just a step, you see. It's all in order, and next week it will be full, for many folks prefer it because of the quiet."

At the end of a precipitous path, which offered every facility for accidents of all sorts, from a sprained ankle to a broken neck, stood the cottage, a little white building with a pretty woodbine over the

porch, gay flowers in the garden, and the blue Atlantic rolling up at the foot of the cliff.

"A regular 'Cottage by the Sea.' It will suit me exactly if I can have that front upper room. I don't mind being alone, so have my trunk taken down, please, and I'll get ready for tea," said I, congratulating myself on my good luck. Alas, how little I knew what a night of terror I was to pass in that picturesque abode!

An hour later, refreshed by my tea and invigorated by the delicious coolness, I plunged recklessly into the gayeties of the season, and accepted two invitations for the evening, — one to a stroll on Sunset Hill, the other to a clam-bake on the beach.

The stroll came first, and while my friend paused at one of the fishily-fragrant houses by the way, to interview her washerwoman, I went on to the hill-top, where a nautical old gentleman with a spy-glass, welcomed me with the amiable remark, —

"Pretty likely place for a prospeck."

Entering into a conversation with this ancient mariner, I asked if he knew any legend or stories concerning the old houses all about us.

"Sights of 'em; but it aint allers the *old* places as has the most stories concernin' 'em. Why, that cottage down yonder aint more 'n fifty year old, and they say there 's been a lot of ghosts seen there, owin' to a man's killin' of himself in the back bedroom."

"What, that house at the end of the lane?" I asked, with sudden interest.

"Jes' so; nice place, but lonesome and dampish. Ghosts and toadstools is apt to locate in nouses of that sort," placidly responded the venerable tar.

The dampness scared me more than the goblins, for I never saw a ghost yet, but I had been haunted by rheumatism, and found it a hard fiend to exorcise.

"I 've taken a room there, so I 'm rather interested in knowing what company I 'm to have."

"Took a room, hev you? Wal, I dare say you won't be troubled. Some folks have a knack of seeing sperrits, and then agin some hasn't. My wife is uncommon powerful that way, but I aint; my sight 's dreadful poor for that sort of critter."

There was such a sly twinkle in the starboard eye

of the old fellow as he spoke, that I laughed outright, and asked, sociably,—

"Has she ever seen the ghosts of the cottage? I think *I* have rather a knack that way, and I'd like to know what to expect."

"No, her sort is the rappin' kind. Down yonder the only ghost I take much stock in is old Bezee Tucker's. He killed himself in the back bedroom, and some folks say they've heard him groanin' there nights, and a drippin' sound; he bled to death, you know. It was kep' quiet at the time, and is forgotten now by all but a few old chaps like me. Bezee was allers civil to the ladies, so I guess he won't bother you, ma'am;" and the old fellow laughed.

"If he does, I'll let you know;" and with that I departed, for my friend called to me that the beach party was clamoring for our company.

In the delights of that festive hour, I forgot the croaking of the ancient mariner, for I was about to taste a clam for the first time in my life, and it was a most absorbing moment. Perched about on the rocks like hungry penguins, we watched the jovial cooks with breathless interest, as they struggled

with refractory frying-pans, fish that stubbornly refused to brown, steaming seaweed and hot stones.

A certain captivating little Margie waited upon me so prettily that I should have been tempted to try a sea porcupine unskinned if she had offered it, so irresistible was her chirping way of saying, "Oh, here 's a perfectly lovely one! Do take him by his little black head and eat him quick."

So beguiled, I indulged recklessly in clams, served hot between two shells, little dreaming what a price I was to pay for that marine banquet.

We kept up till late, and then I was left at my own door by my friend, who informed me that York was a very primitive, safe place, where people slept with unlocked doors, and nothing ever went amiss o' nights.

I said nothing of the ghosts, being ashamed to own that I quaked a little at the idea of the "back bedroom," as I shut out the friendly faces and bolted myself in.

A lamp and matches stood in the hall, and lighting the lamp, I whisked up stairs with suspicious rapidity, locked my door and retired to bed, firmly

refusing to own even to myself that I had ever heard the name of Bezee Tucker.

Being very tired, I soon fell asleep; but fried potatoes and a dozen or two of hot clams are not viands best fitted to insure quiet repose, so a fit of nightmare brought me to a realizing sense of my indiscretion.

From a chaos of wild dreams was finally evolved a gigantic clam, whose mission it was to devour me as I had devoured its relatives. The sharp shells gaped before me, a solemn voice said, "Take her by her little head and eat her quick." Retribution was at hand, and, with a despairing effort to escape by diving, I bumped my head smartly against the wall, and woke up feeling as if there was an earthquake under the bed.

Collecting my scattered wits, I tried to compose myself to slumber again; but alas! that fatal feast had murdered sleep, and I vainly tried to lull my wakeful senses with the rustle of woodbine leaves about the window, and the breaking waves upon the beach.

In one of the pauses between the ebb and flow of

the waves, I heard a curious sound in the house, — a muffled sort of moan, coming at regular intervals. And, as I sat up to make out where it was, another sound caught my attentive ear. Drip, drip, drip, went something out in the hall, and in an instant the tale told me on Sunset Hill came back with unpleasant vividness.

"Nonsense! it is raining, and the roof leaks," I said to myself, while a disagreeable thrill went through me, and fancy, aided by indigestion, began to people the house with uncanny inmates.

No rain had fallen for weeks, and peeping through my curtain I saw the big, bright stars shining in a cloudless sky; so that explanation failed, and still the drip, drip, drip went on. Likewise the moaning, so distinctly now that it was evident the little back bedroom was next the chamber in which I was quaking at that identical moment.

"Some one is sleeping there," I said, and then recollected that all the rooms were locked, and all the keys but mine in Mrs. Grant's pocket up at the house.

"Well, let the goblins enjoy themselves I won't

disturb them if they let me alone. Some of the ladies thought me brave to dare to sleep here, and it will never do to own I was scared by a foolish story and an odd sound."

So down I lay, and said the multiplication table industriously for several minutes, trying to turn a deaf ear to the outer world, and curb my unruly thoughts. But it was a failure, and, when I found myself saying over and over "Four times twelve is twenty-four," I gave up affecting courage, and went in for a good honest scare.

As a cheerful subject for midnight meditation I kept thinking of B. Tucker, in spite of every effort to abstain. In vain I recalled the fact that the departed gentleman was "allers civil to the ladies." I still was in mortal fear lest he might think it necessary to come and apologize in person for "bothering" me.

Presently a clock struck three, and I involuntarily gave a groan that beat the ghost's all hollow, so full of anguish was I at the thought of several hours of weary waiting in such awesome suspense.

I was not sure at what time the daylight would

appear, and bitterly regretted not gathering useful information about sunrise, tides, and such things, instead of listening to the foolish gossip of Uncle Peter on the hill-top.

Minute after minute dragged slowly on, and I was just thinking that I should be obliged to shout "Fire!" as the only means of relief in my power, when a stealthy step under the window gave me a new sensation.

This was a start, not a scare, for the new visitor was a human foe, and I had little fear of such, being possessed of good lungs, strong arms, and a Roman dagger nearly as big as a carving-knife. That step broke the spell, and, creeping noiselessly to the window, I peeped out to see a dark figure coming up the stem of the tall tree close by, hand over hand, like a sailor or a monkey.

"Two can play at that game, my friend; you scare me, and I'll scare you;" and with an actual sense of relief in breaking the oppressive silence, I suddenly flung up the curtain, and, leaning out, brandished my dagger with what I intended to be an awe-inspiring screech, but, owing to the flutter

of my breath, the effort ended in a curious mixture of howl and bray.

A most effective sound nevertheless; for the rascal dropped as if shot, and, with one upward glance at the white figure dimly seen in the star light, fled as if a legion of goblins were at his heels.

"What next?" thought I, wondering whether tragedy or comedy would close this eventful night.

I sat and waited, chilly, but valiant, while the weird sounds went on within, and silence reigned without, till the cheerful crow of the punctual "cockadoo," as Margie called him, announced the dawn and laid the ghosts. A red glow in the east banished my last fear, and, wrapping the drapery of my couch about me, I soon lay down to quiet slumber, quite worn out.

The sun shining in my face waked me; a bell ringing spasmodically warned me to hurry, and a childish voice calling out, "Bet-fast is most weady, Miss Wee," assured me that sweet little spirits haunted the cottage as well as ghostly ones.

As I left my room to join Margie, who was waiting in the porch, and looking like a rosy morning

glory half-way up the woodbine trellis, I saw two things which caused me to feel that the horrors of the night were not all imaginary.

Just outside the back bedroom door was a damp place, as if that part of the floor had been newly washed; and when, goaded by curiosity, I peeped through the keyhole of the haunted chamber, my eye distinctly saw an open razor lying on a dusty table.

My vision was limited to that one object, but it was quite enough, and I went up the hill brooding darkly over the secret hidden in my breast. I longed to tell some one, but was ashamed, and, when asked why so pale and absent-minded, I answered, with a gloomy smile, —

"It is the clams."

All day I hid my sufferings pretty well, but as night approached, and I thought of another lonely vigil in the haunted cottage, my heart began to fail, and, when we sat telling stories in the dusk, a brilliant idea came into my head.

I would relate my ghost story, and rouse the curiosity of the listeners to such a pitch that some

of them would offer to share my quarters, in hopes of seeing the spirit of the restless Tucker.

Cheered by this delusive fancy, when my turn came I made a thrilling tale of the night's adventures, and, having worked my audience up to a flattering state of excitement, paused for applause.

It came in a most unexpected form, however, for Mrs. Grant burst out laughing, and the two boys, Johnny and Joe, rolled off the piazza in convulsions of merriment.

Much disgusted at this unseemly demonstration, I demanded the cause of it, and involuntarily joined in the general shout when Mrs. Grant demolished my ghost by informing me that Bezee Tucker lived, died in, and haunted the tumble-down house at the *other* end of the lane.

"Then who or what made those mysterious noises?" I asked, relieved but rather nettled at the downfall of my romance.

"My brother Seth," replied Mrs. Grant, still laughing. "I thought you might be afraid to be there all alone, so he slipped into the bedroom, and I forgot to tell you. He's a powerful snorer, and

that's one of the awful sounds. The other was the dripping of salt water; for you wanted some, and the girl got it in a leaky pail. Seth wiped up the slops when he came out early in the morning."

I said nothing about the keyhole view of the harmless razor, but, feeling that I did deserve some credit for my heroic reception of the burglar, I mildly asked if it was the custom in York for men as well as turkeys to roost in trees.

An explosion from the boys extinguished my last hope of glory, for as soon as he could speak Joe answered, unable to resist the joke, though telling it betrayed his own transgressions.

"Johnny planned to be up awful early, and pick the last cherries off that tree. I wanted to get ahead of him, so I sneaked down before light to humbug him, for I was going a-fishing, and we have to be off by four."

"Did you get your cherries?" I asked, bound to have some of the laugh on my side.

"Guess I didn't," grumbled Joe, rubbing his knees, while Johnny added, with an exulting chuckle, —

"He got a horrid scare and a right good scraping, for he didn't know any one was down there. Couldn't go fishing either, he was so lame, and I had the cherries after all. Served him right, didn't it?"

No answer was necessary, for the two lads indulged in a friendly scuffle among the hay-cocks, while Mrs. Grant went off to repeat the tale in the kitchen, whence the sound of a muffled roar soon assured me that Seth was enjoying the joke as well as the rest of us.

XII.

KITTY'S CATTLE SHOW.

LITTLE Kitty was an orphan, and she lived in the poor-house, where she ran errands, tended babies, and was everybody's servant. A droll, happy-hearted child, who did her best to be good, and was never tired of hoping that something pleasant would happen.

She had often heard of Cattle Shows, but had never been to one, though she lived in a town where there was one every year.

As October came, and people began to get ready for the show, Kitty was seized with a strong desire to go, and asked endless questions about it of old Sam, who lived in the house.

"Did you say anybody could go in for nothing if they took something to show?" she asked.

"Yes; and them that has the best fruit, or cows, or butter, or whatever it is, they gets a premium," said Sam, chopping away

"What 's a primmynum ?" asked Kitty, forgetting to pick up chips, in her interest.

"It 's money; some gets a lot, and some only a dollar, or so."

"I wish I had something nice to show, but I don't own anything but puss," and the little girl stroked the plump, white kitten that was frisking all over her.

"Better send her; she 's pretty enough to fetch a prize anywheres," said Sam, who was fond of both Kittys.

"Do they have cats there?" asked the child, soberly.

"Ought to, if they don't, for, if cats aint cattle, I don't see what they be," and old Sam laughed, as if he had made a joke.

"I mean to take her and see the show, any way, for that will be splendid, even if she don't get any money! O, puss, will you go, and behave well, and get a primmynum for me, so I can buy a book of stories?" cried Kitty, upsetting her basket in her sudden skip at the fine plan.

Puss turned a somersault, raced after a chicken,

and then rushed up her mistress' back, and, perching demurely on her shoulder, peeped into her face, as if asking if pranks like these wouldn't win a prize anywhere.

"You are going to take Mr. Green's hens for him; can't I go with you? I won't be any trouble, and I do so want to see the fun," added Kitty, after thinking over her plan a few minutes.

Now, Sam meant to take her, but had not told her so yet, and now, being a waggish old fellow, he thought he would let her take her cat, for the joke of it, so he said soberly, —

"Yes, I'll tuck you in somewheres, and you'd better put puss into the blackbird's old cage, else she will get scared, and run away. You stand it among the chicken-coops, and folks will admire her, I aint a doubt."

Innocent little Kitty was in raptures at the prospect, though the people in the house laughed at her. But she firmly believed it was all right, and made her preparations with solemn care.

The old cage was scrubbed till the wires shone, then she trimmed it up with evergreen, and put a

bed of scarlet leaves for snowy puss to lie on. Puss was washed, and combed, and decked with a blue bow on the grand day, and, when she had been persuaded to enter her pretty prison, the effect was charming.

A happier little lass was seldom seen than Kitty when, dressed in her clean, blue check frock, and the old hat, with a faded ribbon, she rode away with Sam; and behind, among the hen-coops, was Miss Puss, much excited by the clucking and fluttering of her fellow-travellers.

When the show grounds were reached, Kitty thought the bustle and the noise quite as interesting as the cattle; and when, after putting his poultry in its place, Sam led her up into the great hall where the fruit and flowers were, she began to imagine that the fairy tales were coming true.

While she stood staring at some very astonishing worsted-work pictures, a lady, who was arranging fruit near by, upset a basket of fine peaches, and they rolled away under tables and chairs.

"I'll pick 'em up, ma'am," cried Kitty, who loved to be useful; and down she went on her hands and knees, and carefully picked up every runaway.

"What is your name, my obliging little girl?" asked the lady, as she brushed up the last yellow peach.

"Kitty; and I live at the poor-house; and I never saw a Cattle Show before, 'cause I didn't have any thing to bring," said the child, feeling as important with her cat as a whole agricultural society.

"What did you bring, — patchwork?"

"O, no, ma'am, a lovely cat, and she is down stairs with the hens, — all white, with blue eyes and a blue bow," cried Kitty.

"I want to see her," said a little girl, popping her head up from behind the table, where she had bashfully hidden from the stranger.

The lady consented, and the children went away together.

While they were gone, Sam came to find his little friend, and the kind lady, amused at the cat story, asked about the child.

"She aint no friends but me and the kitten, so I thought I'd give the poor little soul a bit of pleasure. The quarter I'll get for fetching Green's hens will

get Kitty some dinner, and a book maybe, or something to remember Cattle Show by. Shouldn't wonder if I earned a trifle more doing chores round to-day; if so, I shall give it to her for a premium, 'cause I fetched the cat for fun, and wouldn't like to disappoint the child."

As Sam laughed, and rubbed his rough hands over the joke of surprising Kitty, the lady looked at his kind old face, and resolved to give him a pleasure, too, and of the sort he liked.

She was rich and generous, and, when her little girl came back, begging her to buy the lovely kitten, she said she would, and put five dollars into Sam's hands, telling him that was Kitty's premium, to be used in buying clothes and comforts for the motherless child.

Kitty was quite willing to sell puss, for five dollars seemed a splendid fortune to her. Such a happy day as that was, for she saw everything, had a good dinner, bought "Babes in the Wood" of a peddler, and, best of all, made friends.

Miss Puss was brought up by her new mistress, and put on a table among the flowers, where the

pretty cage and the plump, tricksy kitten attracted much attention, for the story was told, and the little girl's droll contribution much laughed over.

But the poor-house people didn't laugh, for they were so surprised and delighted at this unexpected success that they were never tired of talking about Kitty's Cattle Show.

XIII.

WHAT BECOMES OF THE PINS.

MISS Ellen was making a new pincushion, and a very pretty one it promised to be, for she had much taste, and spent half her time embroidering chair-covers, crocheting tidies, and all sorts of dainty trifles. Her room was full of them; and she often declared that she did wish some one would invent a new sort of fancy-work, since she had tried all the old kinds till she was tired of them. Painting china, carving wood, button-holing butterflies and daisies onto Turkish towelling, and making peacock-feather trimming, amused her for a time; but as she was not very successful she soon gave up trying these branches, and wondered if she would not take a little plain sewing for a change.

The old cushion stood on her table beside the new one; which was ready for its trimming of lace and ribbon. A row of delicate new pins also lay wait-

ing to adorn the red satin mound, and in the old blue one still remained several pins that had evidently seen hard service.

Miss Ellen was putting a dozen needles into her book, having just picked them out of the old cushion, and, as she quilted them through the flannel leaves, she said half aloud, —

"It is very evident where the needles go, but I really do wish I knew what becomes of the pins."

"I can tell you," answered a small, sharp voice, as a long brass pin tried to straighten itself up in the middle of a faded blue cornflower, evidently prepared to address the meeting.

Miss Ellen stared much surprised, for she had used this big pin a good deal lately, but never heard it speak before. As she looked at it she saw for the first time that its head had a tiny face, with silvery hair, two merry eyes, and a wee mouth out of which came the metallic little voice that pierced her ear, small as it was.

"Dear me!" she said; then added politely, "if you can tell I should be very happy to hear, for

it has long been a great mystery, and no one could explain it."

The old pin tried to sit erect, and the merry eye twinkled as it went on like a garrulous creature, glad to talk after long silence:—

"Men make many wonderful discoveries, my dear, but they have never found that out, and never will, because we belong to women, and only a feminine ear can hear us, a feminine mind understand our mission, or sympathize with our trials, experiences, and triumphs. For we have all these as well as human beings, and there really is not much difference between us when we come to look into the matter."

This was such a curious statement that Miss Ellen forgot her work to listen intently, and all the needles fixed their eyes on the audacious pin. Not a whit abashed it thus continued:—

"I am called 'Granny' among my friends, because I have had a long and eventful life. I am hearty and well, however, in spite of this crick in my back, and hope to serve you a good while yet, for you seem to appreciate me, stout and ordinary as I look.

"Yes, my dear, pins and people *are* alike, and that

rusty darning-needle need not stare so rudely, for I shall prove what I say. We are divided into classes by birth and constitution, and each can do much in its own sphere. I am a shawl pin, and it would be foolish in me to aspire to the duties of those dainty lace pins made to fasten a collar. I am contented with my lot, however, and, being of a strong make and enterprising spirit, have had many adventures, some perils, and great satisfactions since I left the factory long ago. I well remember how eagerly I looked about me when the paper in which I lived, with some hundreds of relations, was hung up in a shop window, to display our glittering ranks and tempt people to buy. At last a purchaser came, a dashing young lady who bought us with several other fancy articles, and carried us away in a smart little bag, humming and talking to herself, in what I thought a very curious way.

"When we were taken out I was all in a flutter to see where I was and what would happen next. There were so many of us, I could hardly hope to go first, for I was in the third row, and most people take us in order. But Cora was a hasty, careless

soul, and pulled us out at random, so I soon found myself stuck up in a big untidy cushion, with every sort of pin you can imagine. Such a gay and giddy set I never saw, and really, my dear, their ways and conversation were quite startling to an ignorant young thing like me. Pearl, coral, diamond, jet, gold, and silver heads, were all around me as well as vulgar brass knobs, jaunty black pins, good for nothing as they snap at the least strain, and my own relations, looking eminently neat and respectable among this theatrical rabble. For I will not disguise from you, Miss Ellen, that my first mistress was an actress, and my life a very gay one at the beginning. Merry, kind, and careless was the pretty Cora, and I am bound to confess I enjoyed myself immensely, for I was taken by chance with half a dozen friends to pin up the folds of her velvet train and mantle, in a fairy spectacle where she played the queen. It was very splendid, and, snugly settled among the soft folds, I saw it all, and probably felt that I too had my part; humble as it was, it was faithfully performed, and I never once deserted my post for six weeks.

"Among the elves who went flitting about with silvery wings and spangled robes was one dear child who was the good genius of the queen, and was always fluttering near her, so I could not help seeing and loving the dear creature. She danced and sung, came out of flowers, swung down from trees, popped up from the lower regions, and finally, when all the queen's troubles are over, flew away on a golden cloud, smiling through a blaze of red light, and dropping roses as she vanished.

"When the play ended, I used to see her in an old dress, a thin shawl, and shabby hat, go limping home with a tired-looking woman who dressed the girls.

"I thought a good deal about 'Little Viola,' as they called her, — though her real name was Sally, I believe, — and one dreadful night I played a heroic part, and thrill now when I remember it."

"Go on, please, I long to know," said Miss Ellen, dropping the needle-book into her lap, and leaning forward to listen better.

"One evening the theatre took fire,' continued the old pin impressively. "I don't know how, but

al. of a sudden there was a great uproar, smoke, flames, water pouring, people running frantically about, and such a wild panic I lost my small wits for a time. When I recovered them, I found Cora was leaning from a high window, with something wrapped closely in the velvet mantle that I pinned upon the left shoulder just under a paste buckle that only sparkled while *I* did all the work.

"A little golden head lay close by me, and a white face looked up from the crimson folds, but the sweet eyes were shut, the lips were drawn with pain, a horrible odor of burnt clothes came up to me, and the small hand that clutched Cora's neck was all blistered with the cruel fire which would have devoured the child if my brave mistress had not rescued her at the risk of her own life. *She* could have escaped at first, but she heard Sally cry to her through the blinding smoke, and went to find and rescue her. I dimly recalled that, and pressed closer to the white shoulder, full of pride and affection for the kind soul whom I had often thought too gay and giddy to care for anything but pleasure.

"Now she was calling to the people in the street

to put up a ladder, and, as she leaned and called, I could see the crowds far down, the smoke and flame bursting out below, and hear the hiss of water as it fell upon the blazing walls. It was a most exciting moment, as we hung there, watching the gallant men fix the long ladder, and one come climbing up till we could see his brave face, and hear him shout cheerily, —

"'Swing from the window-sill, I 'll catch you.'

"But Cora answered, as she showed the little yellow head that shone in the red glare, —

"'No, save the child first!'

"'Drop her then, and be quick: it's hot work here,' and the man held up his arms with a laugh, as the flames licked out below as if to eat away the frail support he stood on.

"All in one breathless moment, Cora had torn off the mantle, wrapped the child in it, bound her girdle about it, and finding the gaudy band would not tie, caught out the first pin that came to hand, and fastened it. *I* was that pin; and I felt that the child's life almost depended upon me, for as the precious bundle dropped into the man's hands he caught it by

the cloak, and, putting it on his shoulder, went swiftly down. The belt strained, the velvet tore, I felt myself bending with the weight, and expected every minute to see the child slip, and fall on the stones below. But I held fast, I drove my point deeply in, I twisted myself round so that even the bend should be a help, and I called to the man, 'Hold tight, I'm trying my best, but what can one pin do!'

"Of course he did not hear me, but I really believe my desperate efforts were of some use; for, we got safely down, and were hurried away to the hospital where other poor souls had already gone.

"The good nurse who undid that scorched, drenched, and pitiful bundle, stuck me in her shawl, and resting there, I saw the poor child laid in a little bed, her burns skilfully cared for, and her scattered senses restored by tender words and motherly kisses. How glad I was to hear that she would live, and still more rejoiced to learn next day that Cora was near by, badly burned but not in danger, and anxious to see the child she had saved.

"Nurse Benson took the little thing in her arms to visit my poor mistress, and I went too. But alas!

I never should have known the gay and blooming girl of the day before. Her face and hands were terribly burnt, and she would never again be able to play the lovely queen on any stage, for her fresh beauty was forever lost.

"Hard days for all of us; I took my share of trouble with the rest, though I only suffered from the strain to my back. Nurse Benson straightened me out and kept me in use, so I saw much of pain and patience in that great house, because the little gray shawl which I fastened covered a tender heart, and on that motherly bosom many aching heads found rest, many weary creatures breathed their last, and more than one unhappy soul learned to submit.

"Among these last was poor Cora, for it was very hard to give up beauty, health, and the life she loved, so soon. Yet I do not think she ever regretted the sacrifice when she saw the grateful child well and safe, for little Sally was her best comforter, and through the long weeks she lay there half blind and suffering, the daily visit of the little one cheered her more than anything else. The poor mother

was lost in the great fire, and Cora adopted the orphan as her own, and surely she had a right to what she had so dearly bought.

"They went away together at last, one quite well and strong again, the other a sad wreck, but a better woman for the trial, I think, and she carried comfort with her. Poor little Sally led her, a faithful guide, a tender nurse, a devoted daughter to her all her life."

Here the pin paused, out of breath, and Miss Ellen shook a bright drop off the lace that lay in her lap, as she said in a tone of real interest, —

"What happened next? How long did you stay in the hospital?"

"I stayed a year, for Nurse used me one day to pin up a print at the foot of a poor man's bed, and he took such comfort in it they let it hang till he died. A lovely picture of a person who held out his arms to all the suffering and oppressed, and they gathered about him to be comforted and saved. The forlorn soul had led a wicked life, and now lay dying a long and painful death, but something in that divine face taught him to hope for pardon, and

when no eye but mine saw him in the lonely nights he wept, and prayed, and struggled to repent. I think he was forgiven, for when at last he lay dead a smile was on his lips that never had been there before. Then the print was taken down, and I was used to pin up a bundle of red flannel by one of the women, and for months I lay in a dark chest, meditating on the lessons I had already learned.

"Suddenly I was taken out, and when a queer round pin-ball of the flannel had been made by a nice old lady, I was stuck in it with a party of fat needles, and a few of my own race, all with stout bodies and big heads.

"'The dear boy is clumsy with his fingers, and needs strong things to use,' said the old lady, as she held the tomato cushion in both hands and kissed it before she put it into a soldier's 'comfort bag.'

"'Now I shall have a lively time!' I thought, and looked gaily about me, for I liked adventures, and felt that I was sure of them now.

"I cannot begin to tell you all I went through with that boy, for he was brave as a lion and got many hard knocks. We marched, and camped, and

fought, and suffered, but we *never* ran away, and when at last a Minie ball came smashing through the red cushion (which Dick often carried in his pocket as a sort of charm to keep him safe, for men seldom use pins), I nearly lost my head, for the stuffing flew out, and we were all knocked about in a dreadful way. The cushion and the old wallet together saved Dick's life, however, for the ball did not reach his brave heart, and the last I saw of him as I fell out of the hasty hand that felt for a wound was a soft look in the brave bright eyes, as he said to himself with a smile, —

"'Dear old mother hasn't lost her boy yet, thank God!'

"A colored lad picked me up, as I lay shining on the grass, and pins being scarce in those parts, gave me to his mammy, who kept me to fasten her turban. Quite a new scene I found, for in the old cabin were a dozen children and their mothers making ready to go North. The men were all away fighting or serving the army, so mammy led the little troop, and they marched off one day following the gay turban like a banner, for she had a valiant soul

and was bound to find safety and freedom for her children at all risks.

"In my many wanderings to and fro, I never made so strange a journey as that one, but I enjoyed it, full of danger, weariness and privation as it was; and every morning when mammy put on the red and yellow handkerchief I was proud to sit aloft on that good gray head, and lead the forlorn little army toward a land of liberty.

"We got there at last, and she fell to work over a washtub to earn the bread for the hungry mouths. I had stood by her through all those weary weeks, and did not want to leave her now, but went off pinning a paper round some clean clothes on a Saturday morning.

"'Now I wonder what will come next!' I thought, as Thomas Jefferson, or 'Jeff,' as they called him, went whistling away with the parcel through the streets.

"Crossing the park, he spied a lovely butterfly which had strayed in from the country; caught and pinned it on his hat to please little Dinah when he got home. The pretty creature soon writhed its

delicate life away, but its beauty attracted the eye of a pale girl hurrying along with a roll of work under her arm.

"'Will you sell me that?' she asked, and Jeff gladly consented, wondering what she would do with it. So did I, but when we got to her room I soon saw, for she pinned the impaled butterfly against a bit of blue paper, and painted it so well that its golden wings seemed to quiver as they did in life. A very poor place it was, but full of lovely things, and I grew artistic with just looking about me at the pictures on the walls, the flowers blooming on plates and panels, birds and insects kept for copies, and gay bits of stuff used as back-grounds.

"But more beautiful than anything she made was the girl's quiet, busy life alone in the big city; for, she was hoping to be an artist, and worked day and night to compass her desire. So poor, but so happy, I used to wonder why no one helped her and kept her from such hard, yet patient, waiting. But no one did, and I could watch her toiling away as I held the butterfly against the wall, feeling as if it was a symbol of herself, beating her delicate wings in that

close place till her heart was broken, by the cruel fate that held her there when she should have been out in the free sunshine. But she found a good customer for her pretty work, in a rich lady who had nothing to do but amuse herself, and spent much time and money in fancy-work.

"I know all about it; for, one day an order came from the great store where her designs were often bought, and she was very happy painting some purple pansies upon velvet, and she copied her yellow butterfly to float above them.

"The poor insect was very dry, and crumbled at a touch, so my task there was done, and as my mistress rolled up the packet, she took me to fasten it securely, singing as she did so, for every penny was precious.

"We all went together to the rich lady, and she embroidered the flowers on a screen very like that one yonder. I thought she would throw me away I was so battered now, but she took a fancy to use me in various ways about her canvas work, and I lived with her all winter. A kind lady, my dear, but I often wished I could suggest to her better ways of spending her life than everlasting fancy-work

She never seemed to see the wants of those about her, never lent an ear to the poor, or found delight in giving of her abundance to those who had little to brighten their lives; but sighed because she had nothing to do when the world was full of work, and she blessed with so many good gifts to use and to enjoy. I hope she will see her mistake some day, and not waste all her life on trifles, else she will regret it sadly by and by."

Here the pin paused with a keen glance at Miss Ellen, who had suddenly begun to sew with a bright color in her cheeks, for the purple pansies were on the screen that stood before her fire-place, and she recognized the portrait of herself in that last description. But she did not fancy being lectured by a pin, so she asked with a smile as she plaited up her lace, —

"That is all very interesting, but you have not yet told me what becomes of the pins, Granny."

"Pins, like people, shape their own lives, in a great measure, my dear, and go to their reward when they are used up. The good ones sink into the earth and turn to silver, to come forth again in a new and precious form. The bad ones crumble away to nothing in cracks and dust heaps, with no

hope of salvation, unless some human hand lifts them up and gives them a chance to try again. Some are lazy, and slip out of sight to escape service, some are too sharp, and prick and scratch wherever they are. Others are poor, weak things, who bend up and lose their heads as soon as they are used. Some obtrude themselves on all occasions, and some are never to be found in times of need. All have the choice to wear out or to rust out. I chose the former, and have had a useful, happy life so far. I 'm not as straight as I once was, but I 'm bright still, my point is sharp, my head firm, and age has not weakened me much, I hope, but made me wiser, better, and more contented to do my duty wherever I am, than when I left my native paper long ago."

Before Miss Ellen could express her respect for the worthy old pin, a dismal groan was heard from the blue cushion, and a small voice croaked aloud, —

"Alas, alas, I chose to rust out, and here I am, a miserable, worthless thing, whom no one can use or care for. Lift the ruffle, and behold a sad contrast to the faithful, honest, happy Granny, who has told us such a varied tale."

"Bless me, what possesses everything to-day!" exclaimed Miss Ellen, looking under the frill of the old cushion to see who was speaking now. There to be sure she found a pin hidden away, and so rusty that she could hardly pull it out. But it came creaking forth at the third tug, and when it was set up beside Granny, she cried out in her cheery way, —

"Try Dr. Emery, he can cure most cases of rust, and it is never too late to mend, neighbor."

"Too late for me!" sighed the new comer. "The rust of idleness has eaten into my vitals while I lay in my silken bed, and my chance is gone forever. I was bright, and strong, and sharp once, but I feared work and worry, and I hid, growing duller, dimmer, and more useless every day. I am good for nothing, throw me away, and let the black pins mourn for a wasted life."

"No," said Miss Ellen, "you are not useless, for you two shall sit together in my new cushion, a warning to me, as well as to the other pins, to choose the right way in time, and wear out with doing our duty, rather than rust out as so many do. Thank you, Granny, for your little lecture, I will not forget it, but go at once and find that poor girl, and

help her all I can. Rest here, you good old soul, and teach these little things to follow your example."

As she spoke, Miss Ellen set the two pins in the middle of the red satin cushion, stuck the smaller pins round them, and hastened to put on her shawl lest something should prevent her from going.

"Take me with you; I'm not tired, I love to work! use me, dear mistress, and let me help in the good work!" cried Granny, with a lively skip that sent her out upon the bureau.

So Miss Ellen pinned her shawl with the old pin instead of the fine brooch she had in her hand, and they went gaily away together, leaving the rusty one to bemoan itself, and all the little ones to privately resolve that they would not hide away from care and labor, but take their share bravely and have a good record to show when they went, at last where the good pins go.

THE END.

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